

R E P O R T

OF THE

D E B A T E S

IN BOTH HOUSES OF THE

PARLIAMENT OF IRELAND,

ON

The Roman Catholic Bill,

PASSED IN THE SESSION OF 1792.

D U B L I N :

PRINTED BY H. FITZPATRICK,

FOR T. M'DONNELL, NO. 50, ESSEX-STREET ;
P. BYRNE, NO. 108, GRAFTON-STREET ; AND
J. MOORE, NO. 45, COLLEGE-GREEN.

REPORT

OF THE

DEBATES

IN BOTH HOUSES OF THE

PARLIAMENT OF IRELAND,

OF

THE CATHOLIC BILL

AND IN THE SESSION OF 1829.

DUBLIN:

PRINTED BY H. WATKINS.

FOR J. WATKINS, NO. 50, FLEET-STREET;
AND J. WATKINS, NO. 108, GRAYTON-STREET; AND
J. WATKINS, NO. 45, CORNHILL-STREET.

P R E F A C E.

THE very detached, desultory, and imperfect manner in which the Debates of Parliament, upon the Bill for the relief of the Roman Catholics, have appeared in the several public prints ; and the very great importance of a question so highly interesting to the social, religious and political welfare of three millions of loyal subjects, three-fourths of the inhabitants of this kingdom, proscribed for above a century from the ordinary rights of subjects—has induced the Editor of this volume, who has sedulously attended the progress of the Bill, in every stage of its discussion, to arrange the

the whole in as correct and copious a form, as his own notes, compared with the various reported statements of the business, and the kind assistance of many honorable and right honorable Members who took part in those discussions, can admit.

The question, with the decisions of the legislature thereon, is now therefore, fully before the public; and all parties may judge for themselves, both as to the wisdom of the measure, and the future good policy of fully and fairly adopting three-fourths of the people, under the constitutional inheritance of equal liberty with the rest of their fellow-subjects; and taking to the bosom of the state three-fourths of its children, cut off as prodigals, by the acrimony of former times; yet evincing by their conduct for a century, the cruelty and injustice of this proscription; and the wisdom of that lenient policy, which in a liberal æra, a wise legislature has
now

now conceded in a great measure to their wishes.

That the public may be fully in possession of every important argument affecting the principle of this great subject, a list of the pamphlets which appeared on both sides of the question, is added at the end of this work.

now condensed in a great measure
to their number.

That the public mind is still in
possession of every important prin-
ciple respecting the rights of man-
kind, is a fact, which is the subject
of a great subject, a fact which is
which appeared in the year of 1842
question, is raised to the end of the
work.



A
R E P O R T
OF THE
Debates in both Houses of Parliament,
ON THE
ROMAN CATHOLIC BILL.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

MONDAY, JANUARY 24.

SIR HERCULES LANGRISHE stated to the House his intention of bringing forward a Bill for the further relief of the Roman Catholics of this kingdom; he felt it his duty to use the earliest opportunity of apprizing the House on this his intention; for the present he should say nothing more than merely to mention the subject, but on Wednesday next he should state the outlines of his plan, and then he would take the liberty of asking permission to bring in a Bill for the purpose;—but he thought it right to give the earliest notice of his intent, to the end that the House might have ample time for considering an object of such magnitude.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 26.

Sir Hercules Langrishe rose to state his promised plan, and said:—

Mr. Speaker—It is now just ten years since the cause of the Roman Catholics particularly engaged the attention of Parliament—since we took our last review of those laws which the *passions* and *prejudices*, perhaps the *pressure*, of an intemperate season, had entailed upon them.

I think, Sir, the present times and circumstances invite us to resume that duty.

The good offices we owe, one to another—the indulgence which is due to fellow-subjects, recommended and endeared by the unimpeachable conduct of a century, the consideration that we owe to the national prosperity, all unite in calling our attention to the revision of this subject, at a time when the *public mind* is becoming more enlightened, and prejudices and jealousy are every day yielding to confidence and affection.

It is not without much satisfaction, and I may be allowed to say, some little pride too, that I take a part in this grateful duty; as I consider, amongst the few honours of my humble life, *that* of being almost the first Member of the Irish Parliament who ventured to state to you the *imprudence* and *immorality* of what were *then* the *Popery Laws*; as a system of jurisprudence, subversive of integrity, and as a scheme of government, which, whilst by its severity it alienated the body of the people, by its impolicy forbade them to vest in the state any hostage for their fidelity.

I own, Sir, I was not able in my researches into *Holy Writ*, to meet with that particular passage of
the

the Scripture, that gives an authority to *propagate the Faith* by a *perversion* of morals—or from a principal of *piety*, to prohibit the exercise of *Religious Worship*.

I could not presume to think that it was ever justifiable, for the sake of civil or ceremonial conformity, to build a code of religious laws on the ruins of almost every moral virtue and obligation; to sport with the most sacred feelings, and violate the fondest prepossessions of the human heart—to rob *youth* of education and *age* of authority—to seduce the *son* to become an interested informer against the *piety* of the *father*, and so break the bonds of all domestic fidelity and affection.

I know very well, that the state has a right to *impose conditions* on those who are to become *the state itself*.—But to be entitled to *common benefits*, and *equal protection*, I know of no qualifications but *allegiance* a *peaceable demeanour*, and *obedience* to the laws.

It is now many years since I first stated those ideas to Parliament; but, from the *temper* of the *times*, perhaps the *imbecility* of the *advocate*, I was unsupported, and unsuccessful.

However, the *agitation* of truth must ever make an impression. Succeeding times became more enlightened, and *religious animosity* gave way to *moral justice* and *political wisdom*.

In the year 1774, the Legislature first gratified the Roman Catholics with an opportunity of *testifying their allegiance*, by framing an oath for them, competent to *that test*, without involving any article of *religious faith*, or *speculative opinion*.

Four years afterwards, (in 1778) the Legislature, wisely confiding in their oaths, rewarded their loyalty by some substantial concessions.

The act in their favour then passed, truly recites in the preamble, “ That from their uniform
 “ peaceable behaviour for a long series of years,
 “ it appears reasonable and expedient to relax several of their incapacities and disabilities.”

Accordingly it allowed them “ To take leases
 “ of land for 999 years, and at *any rent*; to enjoy all such estates that shall be left or transferred
 “ to them, and to dispose of the same by will or
 “ otherwise; and that they shall be deviseable
 “ and transferrable, as in the case of other people.”

The abominable usurpation of children against the father was abolished—and to these concessions, the conditions annexed were: Taking the oath of 1774—and that the law should not extend to *converts relapsing*, or to *Protestants becoming Papists*, or *educating their children* in the Popish religion. The Legislature naturally considering that some suspicion attached on *frequent versatility of faith*, and on those who professed a religion themselves which they would not transmit to their posterity.

Four years after that, (in 1782) the spirit of toleration further extended itself, and sound policy gained a further ascendancy in favour of the Roman Catholics. That system of severity, which a few years before was thought *prudence*, began to look something like *injustice*, and what *prejudice* had adopted as *preservation*, moderation began to view as little short of *oppression*.

In 1782, the capacity of acquiring land by purchase (which in 1778 was granted *under a fiction*) was given direct and entire.

“ The acquisition by purchase, grant, limitation, descent or devise, by will or otherwise deviseable, as the lands of Protestants,” was communicated to the Roman Catholics.—Some of their disabilities, as to *education*, were removed—

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The severe law was repealed, that compelled the Papists, to *declare on oath* when, and where, and by whom they heard *mass celebrated*—The unequal attachment of their properties to make reprisals for *common robberies*, was discontinued.—Their houses were no more to be exposed as *public plunder* ; and the preposterous, but offensive prohibition, whereby persons professing the Popish religion were forbidden to reside in certain cities, was repealed.—They were allowed the *full rights of property*.—The *free exercise of religion* ; and to appoint guardians to their own children.

Here, it must be confessed, was a great effort of liberality, in opposition to old *opinions*. The occasion was worthy of the exertion ; and the consequences justified and rewarded it. Exclusive of all moral duty, it was of so great moment to the national prosperity to involve in its interests—to attach—to naturalize in their native country so great a body of its inhabitants—to make them a part of the nation, without whom we could not be a nation at all.

However, Sir, considering the nature of man—the obstinacy of old opinions—and the usual acrimony of religious dissention, I must say, that so signal a triumph over *rooted prejudices*, disclosed such a growing *confidence*—such an amicable *sympathy*—such a relenting of heart, in the predominant powers of the State towards the Roman Catholics of the country, as *ought* to conciliate their affection, engage their gratitude, and confirm their attachment to the State.

And when I say (speaking from a sense of moral obligation) that such conduct of the Legislature ought to have produced this effect. I say, with confidence and assurance, from the authority of experience, that it has produced those effects. It has stamped those sentiments with a deep

deep impresson on the minds of our Catholic brethren—I mean on the minds of those who are sufficiently enlightened to judge of the relations of political society, or feel the force of moral obligation.

If I were not of that opinion, confirmed and decided as it is into conviction, I would not at this moment stand up as their advocate for another concession. For I must take the liberty to say, what it is my duty to say as a member of Parliament, what it is my duty to observe as a common citizen, what is the duty of every person to know and to conform to, “that the State is paramount, and all men who live under its protection, live under its controul, and are amenable to its superiority.” If they approach the Legislature, they must approach it by the avenues the Constitution has marked out; if they apply to Parliament, it must be by *petition*, not *representation* or *remonstrance*; if they would have benefits, they must solicit them as favours, and accept them as concessions. This is not only the constitution of Ireland, but the constitution of every settled government in the known world.

As to the natural Rights of Man (of which we have lately heard so much) they do not belong to political society; they belong to that state of nature which is so accurately described by Mr. Hobbs, and so ardently recommended by Mr. Paine; a state where, indeed, the *race* is to the *swift*, and the *battle* to the *strong*; where possession is *property*, and strength is *right*; a state superior to the conditions of society, the restrictions of covenant, or the bondage of law.

In a society protected by laws, and blessed with a constitution, those laws and that constitution ascertain the *Rights of Man*.

Therefore,

Therefore, Sir, I must freely confess, that notwithstanding my prepossessions in favour of the Roman Catholics, (which I shall always be proud to acknowledge, as they are justified by their conduct) though I can number *some* of them among my *ancestors*; though I love *many* of them as my *friends*, and embrace *all* of them as my *countrymen*, I was yet for some time checked in my ardour, and interrupted in the progress, of my services to them, by reading of late a multitude of publications and paragraphs in the newspapers, and other prints circulated gratis, and communicated to every body, with every degree of industry, purporting to convey the sentiments of the *Catholic Body of Ireland*.

If these were their sentiments, they were such as could not recommend them to the further favour of the State;—they were such as must alienate their old friends, and could not get them new ones, if they would chuse their friends from amongst those who are friends to the Constitution. What was the import?—They were *exhortations* to the people never to be satisfied at any concession, 'till the *State itself* was conceded; not only that, but 'till a *new Constitution* should be made for their present accommodation, and future entertainment;—they were *precautions* against public tranquillity—they were *invitations* to disorder, and *covenants* to discontent;—they were ostentations of *strength*, rather than solicitations for *favours*; rather appeals to the *powers of the people*, than applications to the *authority of the State*;—they involved the *relief* of the Catholic, with the *revolution* of the Government, and were dissertations for *democracy* rather than arguments for *toleration*;—they seemed the projects of some bold *theorists*, whose *principle* was to divide man from man, and whose *politics*, to separate Great Britain

Britain from Ireland;—they seemed to be the effusions of some rash *philosopher*, ignorant of our system, who would set *loose and adrift* the little *planet* we inhabit, and commit it to the vortex of a vain and exploded philosophy; to range the universe without *attraction*, connexion or *relation* to any greater, or other *body*.—Was there a man who felt the blessings of *regulated rights*, and *settled government*; who knew the value of *peace* and the comforts of *property*?—was there a man who preferred *order* to *outrage*, and *happiness* to *speculation*,—or who looked at the growing prosperity of the country, whose mind must not have revolted at the tendency of such doctrines; or who must not have felt an *accumulated concern* and *disappointment*, if he could for a moment suppose that they had originated with our *Catholic brethren*?—that they were the growth of that soil which we had so *late*ly and so *liberally* cultivated?

But common sense and common justice required of us to trace those opinions to their source.

If the *Roman Catholics* embraced those sentiments, *the State* could not embrace them—if they were misled by rash Councils to engage in confederacies of *perpetual requisition*,—If they were not to be satisfied at *any* concession, whilst any thing remained *to be conceded*. In that case common sense must suggest to us, that we should not by any new concession unite more *power with* their *discontent*; for however sincerely we may and *ought* to wish that they should enjoy every comfort and happiness the State can afford them, yet we cannot go so far, as to *alter* or make a *new Constitution* for their accommodation;—we cannot, even for them, hazard the blessings of an *established free Government*, that has been the growth and the wisdom of ages, and finally ratified and settled
for

for above an hundred years ; we are not so *daring* as to commit to the chance of every rash experiment.

If the Roman Catholics could have been so far perverted, as to have addressed the Legislature in these *high tones* of *requisition*, they would have *assaulted* that constitution they affected to *reverence*—they would have made their advances to Parliament as *besiegers*, not *petitioners* ; and Parliament would have been bound, in its own defence, to *repulse* them, to resist their applications. If you were, in that case, to concede or *capitulate*, you would surrender the Constitution in your charge, you would violate your trust, you would betray the state, and be responsible for the anarchy that would rush in upon you.—But I have the happiness now to assert from *authority*, what I have long learned from *experience*, “ That not a sentiment of *this tendency* is entertained by the *Catholic body* ; none such belong to them ; they renounce them ; they utterly disclaim them.”—There is not a class of his Majesty’s subjects more attached than they are to the *monarchy* and *hereditary succession*, more obedient to the *laws*, or more devoted to the *King* and *constitution*, as by law established.

These principles they testify by their *conduct at all times* ; at times very different from the present, when the laws were less indulgent, when they had fewer pledges to bind them to their country ; when *property* and the *titles* of land did not appear (as they now do) irrevocably fixed ; at times when *hostile fleets* and *armies* were on your coast, and when even the *King* on the Throne, by some may not have been supposed to stand (as he does now) without a *rival* in their affections.

They now come forward by solemn declaration to re-assert those principles at the foot of the Throne; to vindicate them from all possible *misconception* or *misrepresentation*; they approach you by the *ways* of the constitution, and with the *words* of the constitution, without asserting a claim of their own, or presuming to dictate to the authority of Parliament; "They desire a further repeal of the laws affecting them; they express gratitude for past favours, confiding in your liberality and benevolence, that your future ones will be as extensive as to your consideration of the general welfare shall seem expedient; disclaiming every thing that can directly or indirectly tend to interrupt the public tranquillity and subjection to the laws; they give you their *past* as a pledge of their future good conduct;" and, give me leave to say, the constitutional language they express, is a further pledge of the constitutional principles they feel.

With such a testimony, I address you in favour of the Roman Catholics of Ireland; with a declaration of this import in my hand, subscribed by an *host*, as to national authority; persons of high distinction, ancient family, great character, enlightened education, ample fortune, and extensive influence in the country; men of general intercourse and knowledge, political, professional, and mercantile; men too, who themselves and their ancestors, have made ample sacrifices to a sanctimonious observance of their vows. Without affecting or entertaining any disrespect for any other orders or classes of the people, I must say, it is from persons of the description which I have given, that *national opinion* and *professional principle* are best to be collected; not from a few deluded people in the *South*; not from a few dissatisfied people in the *North*, nor yet

yet from any strange and incongruous connexion that may be fabricated between *both*; nay, if by some wonderful rotation these two extremities should ever happen to meet; if by some monstrous convulsion the *two poles* (if I may say so) far as they are asunder, should be brought into *conjunction*, they would not have force to disturb the happy and *temperate regions* placed between, where the people enjoy *equal days* and *indulgent heavens*.

With such a declaration of *principles*, by such subscribing *parties*, confirmed by the conduct of an hundred years, and *attested* by the experience and observation of every dispassionate Protestant in the nation; I say, fortified by such superior authority, I feel a total indifference to all the several paragraphs and publications to which I have alluded, from the *massy-pamphlet*, to the *volatile hand-bill*; from the *original* inrollment of discord that takes *post and garrison* in the citadel, to the *detachments* of newspapers that are sent out to *scour the country*. For the honour of the nation, I should wish they were not to travel to other countries; for the peace of the nation, I am not afraid they should travel through this. I know the loyalty of the Roman Catholics of Ireland; I know they will not taste of the cup of sedition, whether it be brought vapid and muddy from the troubled waters of Bethesda's pool; or come heated and mantling from the intemperance of the ale-house.

It is under such a conviction that I address you with confidence for a further repeal of the laws affecting the Roman Catholics, to that extent which your wisdom and liberality shall lead you to think expedient. What that extent shall be, appears to me the only question that can divide the opinion of Parliament on this subject; and I confess, that is a question which may naturally

produce diversity of opinion amongst wise and good men.

As for myself, balanced as I am between *confidence* in the Catholics and devotion to *ancient establishment*, I have not found it easy to accommodate between the two *contending propensities*.

If I were engaged in the unfortunate labours of forming a new Constitution, it never would occur to my mind to introduce the words *Protestant* and *Papist* as terms of *political discrimination*. But as we have a Constitution already established, which we feel competent to preserve *liberty* and to promote *happiness*; and as we have learned from the experience of others the calamities that may occur in composing *a new one*, it must be our constant labour, as it is our dearest *interest*, to watch with a pious vigilance, the *excellent one* we have, and protect it from the hand of innovation and experiment.—We must, in every political transaction, keep that Constitution before our eyes, and act with perpetual reference to its principles.

Under that constitution the predominancy is Protestant.—It was so declared at the revolution—it was so provided in the acts settling the succession of the crown—the King's coronation oath was enjoined in order to keep it so—the King, as first Magistrate of the State, was obliged to take the oath of abjuration, and subscribe the declaration; and every other member of the State, legislative and executive, stands bound under the same obligation.—Whether it was or was not wise at the time to have made so broad a barrier, I shall not, at this period, venture to inquire. I own to you, Sir, I tremble at the notion of reviewing, for the purpose of altering, any of the constituent principles of that revolution, which in its consequences has proved so happy to these countries.

countries. I would not rashly hazard the stability of so noble a fabric, to remove even an acknowledged defect; and especially when the trade of *constitution-making* had grown into a sort of professional practice;—when we see academies opened throughout the country to give diplomas and degrees in that science;—and when even without the advantage of this academical education, common artificers profess to reform the work of Somers and of Locke.

Though I should always hesitate to touch any principle of that revolution;—though we should look up to it as to a polar star, by which we are to steer in whatsoever direction we may shape our course, yet I am not so dogmatical as to say that there is any human institution so immutable and entire, as never, in any degree, to accommodate to any possible change of the times and circumstances; and it has always been my decided opinion, that the severities with which party prejudice and religious animosity inspired the penal statutes that *succeeded* the revolution, are fit objects of frequent revision, for the purpose of repeal or mitigation, in the proportion and to that extent which the temper and condition of the times may render practicable or prudent.—However in such remedial proceedings, it is essential to the good of every State to avoid violent transitions or changes—to guard against sudden or extravagant transfers of power or property.

In endeavouring to ascertain the particular points of relaxation which it would be prudent for me to submit to the wisdom of Parliament, I made it my business to solicit a communication with as many Members of the Legislature as I could, without presumption, consult on the subject.—You, Sir, who know every thing, know that every such consultation which has success for its object,
must

must be conducted and concluded by *mutual deference*, and *concession of opinion*. I should not be sincere in my services to the Roman Catholics, if I were to hazard *every thing* by aspiring at more than appeared to me to be conformable to to the sense of those who are to decide, and to whose judgment I am bound to submit. I therefore, under that impression, confine myself to the following points.

1st. "I would give them the *practice and profession of the Law*," as a reasonable *provision*, and application of their talents to their own country:—2dly. I would restore to them *education, entire and unrestrained*—because I think a *state of ignorance* is a state of *barbarity*. This I think would be accomplished by taking off the necessity for a *license* as enjoined by the act of 1782.—3dly, I would draw closer the bonds of intercourse and affection, by allowing *intermarriage*, and repealing that *cruel statute* that serves to betray female credulity, and bastardize the children of a *virtuous mother*.—4thly. I would remove those obstructions to arts and manufactures, that limit the number of apprentices, which are so necessary to assist and promote *trade*.

I have now, Sir, only to ask your pardon for having taken up so much of your time; but the subject has engaged my mind with so much ardour and affection, that I could not avoid speaking thus largely upon it: It is a subject that I embraced in my *youth*, and shall not cast off in my *age*, unless it shall be disposed to *desert* me. I wish the Protestants and Catholics should, by the benignant progress of time, grow to be *one people*; and they certainly *would*, if some rash intemperance does not interpose to retard the progress, and revive the prejudices which have so long kept us asunder. If the Roman Catholics
look

look to their *old* friends, they will see them prove their sincerity, by labouring the *practicability* of *services*, rather than deluding their hopes by the *magnitude of demand*. I am confident they will *listen* to their *old* friends, and that that patient magnanimity which distinguished and dignified them in *times of rigour*, will not desert them in *times of relaxation*. They may be assured that a perseverance in *that* conduct can alone give their *old friends* a capacity to serve them. And they may likewise be assured; (whatever misrepresentations have gone abroad) that it is owing to the seasonable interpositions of those high authorities of Catholic loyalty to which I have alluded, confronting the publications that traduced their principles, that the favourable sentiments in his Majesty's government are confirmed. It is owing to *that testimony* that I, the humblest, but the oldest of their friends, have the confidence or capacity to plead their cause of this day; and it is a testimony, I trust, will be a powerful advocate for them with the Irish Parliament. At present I shall only move you—

“ That leave be given to bring in a Bill for
 “ removing certain restraints and disabilities
 “ under which his Majesty's Roman Catholic
 “ subjects labour under, from statutes at present
 “ in force.”

The Right Hon. Mr. Hobart rose, and SECONDED the motion, without making any observation.

The Right Hon. Mr. Cuffe, I do not rise to debate the question. But I think that Gentlemen would do well to state their opinion of the conduct of the Roman Catholics. Those headed by a Nobleman who is distinguished for his liberality, and extended property, who have signed the
 declaration

declaration alluded to by the Right Hon. Baronet, deserve every kindness in the power of the Legislature to bestow. They are good citizens—loyal subjects. They have told you that they will be grateful for any indulgence—and that they will not pretend to point out the extent of the relief which in your wisdom you may think proper to bestow. Surely in those circumstances we cannot refuse them some indulgence. But there are Roman Catholics who have conducted themselves in a very different manner. They have established a court of Delegates in the capital ; and they have appointed local committees in the several counties. To the honour of the county which I represent, (Mayo) it is not one of those which is disgraced by such a committee of correspondence. They have entered into associations with the discontented and the turbulent of all religions. And relying upon their power, they presume to dictate to the Legislature, what they will have. This system seems to have been adopted in order to terrify the Parliament. They have also appointed an agent to carry on the business, and this agent, according to their instructions, is not to leave this country until the object shall be accomplished.

My duty as a Member of this House, obliges me to declare to this assembly, and to the world, that neither the Government nor the Gentlemen of the House of Commons will be intimidated by their numbers, their power, or their ENGLISH AGENT. For my part, I am not in the Cabinet, but if I was, I would advise the Minister, and I now do advise him to tell all men of all religions,
 “ WE HAVE POWER ENOUGH TO PROTECT OUR
 “ ESTABLISHMENTS IN CHURCH AND STATE.
 “ WE WILL PROTECT THEM ON THE PRINCIPLES
 “ OF THE REVOLUTION, AND WE WILL PUNISH
 “ THOSE

“ THOSE WHO SEEK TO DISTURB THE PEACE
 “ AND TRANQUILLITY OF THIS GROWING COUN-
 “ TRY.

Colonel Blaquiere. I am satisfied that indulgence should be extended to the Roman Catholics as they have always been attached to the crown and to government. The publications which have been spoken of, in my opinion, can produce no ill effects in persons of sense or education. Certainly they can have no *weight* in this House, as they proceed from persons who are no judges of *weight* or *measure*. I must therefore express my approbation of the whole. I shall not discuss the subject; that having been so ably done by the Right Hon. Baronet, that I must fall infinitely short of him.

The Right Hon. Mr. Ogle. Sir, I do not rise to debate the merits of the question which has been proposed to the House. A better opportunity for that will occur, at a future stage of the business. I have only to request that my Right Hon. friend will not hurry the subject, but give a good deal of time for consideration. This is no trifling affair. The alteration of any part of the Constitution must be confessed to be a question of consequence. Therefore it is, that I hope we shall be indulged with a long day.

We know Sir, what the wishes of the Roman Catholics are—but we do not know what are the sentiments of the Protestants. We do not know whether our constituents are satisfied with the idea of a further relaxation of the Penal Laws.

I assure the Hon. Baronet, that any contest which may take place between us, shall be the contest of friendship and opinion, and nothing

elle. I know his talents and candour, which I must always respect, however we may differ in sentiment.

The Hon. Denis Browne. I agree that this is not a stage for discussing the principles of the bill. When the proper period arrives, we should discuss the subject upon the broad basis of toleration. These cruel restrictions which stained the pages of our statute-book, so shocking were they to the idea of a civilized people, that they reflected more disgrace upon their authors, than they produced injury to the unfortunate people. Time has been requested to consider of the propositions which have been mentioned; I must declare, that considering the liberality of the age—and their eminent services, THEY DO NOT COME UP TO WHAT THE ROMAN CATHOLICS HAD A RIGHT TO EXPECT.

I have heard a great deal mentioned about an intention to disturb the peace of the country. I wish to know what this intention is?—what proof there is of its existence?—and who are the Roman Catholics concerned?—for otherwise it would be idle to enter into a debate upon the matter. Positive I am, that it cannot be the Roman Catholics of Ireland for the last thirty years. Their conduct for that space of time has been not only peaceable, but such as should conciliate the affections of their countrymen of every description. When we were surrounded by a warring world, and menaced with dangers, they were ready to sacrifice every thing in the common cause of the empire. And in their loyal protestations, they never mixed a sentence of complaint relative to their degraded situation in their own country, though they avowed that they were ready to lose their lives in its defence.

I am

I am connected with much property in a particular part of this country, principally inhabited by Roman Catholics. It is no more than my duty to answer for my own country (Mayo) in which the proportion is 125,000 Roman Catholics, to 8,000 Protestants, that their conduct has always been loyal, peaceable, and meritorious.

It has been insinuated, though no direct charge has been made, that the real object of the Roman Catholics is to obtain power; whether by force or by sophistry is indifferent; the attainment of power is the design. This is not the truth. It is not power that the Roman Catholics seek to obtain, but LIBERATION; liberation from a degraded and disgraceful vassalage, odious to the nature of man, and the reproach of a free country.

What, save the penal laws, has kept Ireland backward for such a number of years, notwithstanding all the advantages of climate and situation? Nothing. They separated the people from the Legislature, cramped their industry and subdued their genius. See the consequences that followed a relaxation of the penal laws. The nation rapidly advanced in riches, prosperity, commerce, tranquillity, and happiness. Pursue the same line of conduct, and it must produce similar consequences. I shall only add at present, that I hope the day is not far distant, when all descriptions of Irishmen shall cordially unite, and all prejudice be at an end.

Mr. Coote. It is dangerous to attempt altering any part of the Constitution as settled at the Revolution. Caution, therefore, is extremely necessary; particularly as experience has proved the great advantages of the Revolution to this country. I approve of the intention of restoring

to the Roman Catholics the education of their children, and think it cannot be done too soon. The admission of Roman Catholics to the Bar may also be advantageous. But so long as it remains a principle with the Roman Catholics to procure CONVERTS to their religion; allowing them to intermarry, can only be productive of evil and family strife.

I hope the day will never arrive in which they will be entitled to a vote on elections, or to any share in the Legislature. I hope this will always be the opinion of Administration. But should a Government be otherwise disposed in this country, they will find themselves destitute of support, and abandoned by every Protestant of property and influence.

Right Hon. Mr. Secretary Hobart. It was not my intention to debate this question. I should not have risen were it not for the suggestion of my Right Hon. Friend on the second bench (Mr. Cuffe). I therefore declare that *if* any attack should be made on the establishments in Church and State, it is the fixed determination of Government to support them; and any attempt of this nature either by force or intimidation, will be found to meet the decided opposition of the Government of both countries.

Leave was then given to bring in the bill, and a Committee appointed to prepare the same, without a dissenting voice.

Mr. O'Hara rose and said, he agreed with most of the gentlemen who had expressed their sentiments respecting the giving some further relief to the Roman Catholics, and very heartily concurred with the House in the leave given to bring in a Bill
for

for that purpose. But that in order to have the subject fully before the House, it might be wished that the House knew exactly the particulars in which the Roman Catholics desire relief; first because Parliament might otherwise unintentionally omit matter which appear essentially necessary to the Roman Catholics, however unimportant they appear to Parliament, and so fail of giving satisfaction; but more particularly because, if the relief desired by the Roman Catholics were ascertained the House might then draw the line definitively, and say "we will meet your wishes thus far, but never can go farther."

He said, he had thought in the year 1782, that every thing was then done which was necessary to relieve the conscience, or essential to the happiness of the Roman Catholics, and he was sure such was the intention of Parliament; but the House then proceeded without knowing from the Roman Catholics what the particulars were in which they desired relief. By which means the greater opening was left to desire further relief in the present instance. But if we now were in possession of a statement of their wishes made by themselves, we might easily draw the line by the new act of Parliament so strongly, as to preclude any expectation of change, at least for many years to come.

These considerations (he said) had been strong inducements with him to listen to the desire of a very particular friend of his, to lay such a statement before the House. A friend who was not of the Roman Catholic persuasion; but one to whom he would not willingly refuse any thing he could ask, had desired him to present such a statement, as a personal favour. Though he did not know the petitioners, he knew the integrity of his friend, who told him they were altogether worth
upwards

upwards of a million, which he mentioned to shew that they were considerable individuals, whose sentiments might be supposed to coincide with the greater part at least of the Roman Catholics.

However, though he presented the petition, he requested not to be considered as its particular patron, for he had agreed to present it upon the terms only of reserving to himself the full liberty of discussing every part of it, and condemning or approving as he might think proper. If there be any thing exceptionable in the petition, it was not his; if more were desired by it than were reasonable or consistent with our establishments in church or state, he would decidedly vote against such parts.

Under those circumstances he ventured to offer the petition to the House, and the rather because, to petition Parliament is a matter of right in the subject; so much so, that a Member can hardly refuse to present a petition if required by no improper description of men; but more particularly, because the petition brought information before the House which might be useful in framing the bill; that the petitioners after stating the particulars in which they hoped for relief, promised to acquiesce in whatsoever relief Parliament might think proper to give them.

Counsellor Sheridan thought it a very odd way of introducing a petition—to state that it came not from any particular body of men—but from an INTIMATE ACQUAINTANCE—In the present instance, it was probably nothing more or less than this, that an intimate acquaintance of the Hon. Member's prayed the House that all the
places

places of trust and emolument in the State should be open to Roman Catholics.

[MR. BURKE, whom we suppose to be the gentleman alluded to by Mr. O'Hara, having incautiously ventured into the body of the House behind the Speaker's chair, to speak with Mr. O'Hara, there arose a general cry of "Into custody!"—he however withdrew time enough to avoid it.]

Mr. Tuler was against receiving the petition as being informal—the fate of this petition, he said, brought to his mind a ludicrous apposite cross-reading—"This day a petition was presented—but it luckily missed fire—and the villains made off." He moved the question of adjournment.

Hon. D. Browne was for receiving the petition.

Mr. O'Hara withdrew the petition for the present, because he could not say he had seen the petitioners sign it; but that he should present it another day; and that he thought the House ought to be glad to know what relief was prayed, in order that it might give satisfaction so far as was consistent with our civil and religious establishments.

Mr. Grattan said, that he should be very sorry that any man should depart, possessed with an idea that this House had refused to receive the Catholic petition, or committed an act so outrageous and unconstitutional—but an informality attending the manner of presenting it has induced the Member himself to postpone the business for another day; Sir, I concur with the mover of the bill in every thing he has said in favour of the Catholic body, 'tis, therefore, that I cannot agree with, other gentlemen who talk of their evil intentions and
feditious

seditionous publications.—Sir, I know of none such that can be charged to the Roman Catholics, nor do I see how gentlemen can assent to a bill which supposes the merits of Catholics, and insinuations that bespeak the contrary:—What you give to the Roman Catholics—give it liberally:—what you refuse—refuse decently:—whatever you do—do with discretion—whatever you say—let it be the language of decency and good manners.

Mr. G. Ponsonby held it to be the undoubted right of the constituent to petition Parliament in a legal and respectful manner—but only in this manner—on this subject he was remarkably attentive to rule and form, and objected on that account to the reception of the petition, as it contravened every one of the established forms.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 4.

Sir Hercules Langrishe in a short speech, introduced his Bill for the relief of Roman Catholics—it was read for the first time. *Sir Hercules* said, it was a matter of so much importance, that lest its objects should be misconceived, he thought it necessary that it should be printed, and that a sufficient time should be given to have it fully understood; he trusted when understood, it would be approved by every man in the nation. He moved that the Bill be printed.

It is as follows :

ROMAN

ROMAN CATHOLIC BILL.

“ WHEREAS by an act passed in this kingdom in the sixth year of Queen Anne, entitled ‘ An act to explain and amend an act to prevent Papists being Solicitors,’ and by another act passed in this kingdom in the first year of King George the Second, entitled ‘ An act for regulating the admission of barristers at law, fix clerks and attornies, and of other persons into offices and employments, and for preventing Papists practising as solicitors, and for further strengthening the Protestant interest in this kingdom,’ it is required, that every person who shall apply to be called to the Bar or to be admitted an attorney, shall, before such an application or admission or taking upon them to practise as aforesaid, take and subscribe the several oaths, and repeat and subscribe the declaration in and by the said acts respectively mentioned or directed.

“ And whereas it is deemed expedient to enable his Majesty’s subjects of Ireland, professing the Roman Catholic religion, to become barristers at law, and to practise as attornies, solicitors and notaries, upon their taking the oath of allegiance herein after mentioned.

“ Be it enacted, by the King’s most excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Lords Spiritual and temporal and Commons in this present Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, that the oaths and declaration in and by the acts respectively required to be taken and subscribed by every person who shall be admitted or practise as a counsellor or barrister at law, attorney, solicitor or notary, shall from and after the twenty-fourth day of June, in the year one thousand seven hundred and ninety-two, be no longer required to be taken or subscribed by any person professing the

Roman Catholic religion, as a qualification to enable him to be admitted to the bar, or to act as an attorney, solicitor or notary; but the oath of allegiance appointed to be taken and subscribed, by an act passed in the thirteenth and fourteenth years of his present Majesty's reign, entitled 'An act to enable his Majesty's subjects of whatever persuasion to testify their allegiance to him,' shall, from and after the said twenty fourth day of June, one thousand seven hundred and ninety-two, be administered, taken and subscribed to and by persons professing the Roman Catholic religion to be admitted barristers and to practise as attornies, solicitors and notaries, have the same effect and operation to all intents and purposes, as the taking and subscribing of the oaths and declaration, in the room of which the same is hereby substituted, could have had, any law to the contrary notwithstanding. Provided always, that nothing herein contained shall extend to enable or qualify any person to hold or enjoy the place or office of King's counsel.

" And whereas by an act passed in this kingdom in the sixth year of Queen Anne, it is enacted, 'that no attorney or solicitor shall take, keep or have any Papist or reputed Papist to be his apprentice or clerk.'

" Be it enacted, that it shall and may be lawful to and for any attorney or solicitor to have, keep or employ as an apprentice or clerk any person professing the Roman Catholic religion, who shall have previously duly taken and subscribed in his Majesty's Court of King's Bench the said oath of allegiance set out in this said act of the thirteenth and fourteenth years of the reign of his present Majesty, and that from the passing of this act, the words following, (to wit) " and that I will not knowingly take as an ap-
 " prentice

“ prentice or employ as clerk or solicitor any person of the Popish religion,” shall be omitted in the oath required by an act passed in the seventh year of the reign of King George the Second, entitled ‘ An act for the amendment of the law in relation to Popish solicitors and for remedying other mischiefs in relation to the practitioners in the several courts of law, required to be taken by every master in Chancery, six clerk of the Court of Chancery, barrister at law, attorney and officer of any of the courts in Dublin, and every deputy of such officer and every solicitor.’

“ And whereas by the said last mentioned act, it is enacted, that if any person admitted a barrister, attorney or solicitor, shall marry any woman of the popish religion, such person shall be deemed a papist, and be disabled from being a barrister, attorney or solicitor.

“ Be it enacted, that so much of the said recited act be and the same is hereby repealed, and that every person so married or marrying, being otherwise duly entitled, may notwithstanding such marriage continue or be admitted to practice as a barrister, attorney or solicitor.

“ And whereas by an act passed in the first year of the reign of King George the Second, entitled ‘ An act for regulating the admission of barristers at law, six clerks and attornies, and of other persons into offices and employments; and for preventing papists practising as solicitors, and for further strengthening the Protestant interest in this kingdom,’ it is enacted that every person converted from the popish to the Protestant religion, or born of a popish parent or parents, who from and after the first day of August one thousand seven hundred and twenty eight shall apply to be called to the bar, or to be admitted a six clerk or attorney, or

shall take upon him to practise as a solicitor, or to act as an officer or deputy officer as aforesaid, shall upon such application, or before taking on him to act or practise as aforesaid, prove before the Lord Chancellor or the commissioner of the Great Seal, the two Chief Justices, the Chief Baron, the Justices of the one bench and of the other, and the Barons of his Majesty's Court of Exchequer in Ireland for the time being, or any two or more of them (of which the Lord Chancellor or one of the Commissioners of the Great Seal, or one of the said Chief Justices, or the Chief Baron, for the time being, shall be one) by sufficient witness or witnesses upon oath, which they or any two of them are hereby authorized to administer, that such person has professed himself and continued to be a Protestant for the space of two years immediately before the time of making such proof.

“ Be it enacted, that so much of the said act as is herein recited be and the same is hereby repealed.

“ And whereas by an act passed in the twenty-first and twenty-second years of his present Majesty, entitled ‘ An act to regulate the admission of barristers at law,’ it is enacted that no person shall be admitted to the degree of a barrister at law who shall not have been received and admitted into the society of King's Inns as a student five years previous to the time of his applying to be admitted to the said degree; and it is also by the said act further enacted that no person shall be admitted into the said society as a student who shall not at the time of his admission be of the Protestant religion.

“ And whereas by the last recited clause persons professing the Popish religion were not capable of complying with or fulfilling such pre-
vious

vious qualification, to be admitted to the said degree of barrister at law,

“ Be it enacted, by the authority aforesaid, that all and every such person or persons professing the Popish religion, who on or before the twenty-seventh day of June next shall have performed every other requisite enjoined by this or any other law or usage to qualify them for being admitted to the degree of barrister at law, may be admitted to the same on paying the usual fees to said society, although he or they shall not have been admitted as student or students previous to the time of his or their applying to be admitted to said degree; and that from and after the passing this act so much of the said last recited act as enacts, that no person shall be admitted into the said society as a student who shall not at the time of his admission be of the Protestant religion, be and is hereby repealed.

“ And whereas an act passed in the ninth year of King William the Third, entitled ‘ An act to prevent Protestants intermarrying with Papists,’ and whereas it is no longer necessary to continue the said act in force.

“ Be it therefore enacted that the said act shall be and the same is hereby repealed. Provided always that the repeal thereof shall not in any sort affect any suit heretofore commenced and now depending, grounded on the said act.

“ And be it further enacted, that so much of an act passed in this kingdom in the second year of Queen Anne, entitled ‘ An act to prevent the further growth of Popery,’ as subjects Protestants intermarrying with Papists either within the kingdom or in parts without the kingdom, to the pains, penalties or disabilities inflicted by the said last-mentioned act of the ninth year of King William the

the Third, shall be and the same are hereby repealed.

“ Provided always, and be it enacted, that nothing herein contained shall extend or be construed to extend to enable any Protestant who now is or hereafter shall be married to a Popish wife to vote at any election of representatives to serve in Parliament, other than as they may by laws in being before the passing of this act.

“ And be it further enacted that it shall and may be lawful to and for Protestants and persons professing the Roman Catholic religion to intermarry, and to and for archbishops, bishops and all persons having lawful jurisdiction to grant licenses for marriages to be celebrated between Protestants and persons professing the Roman Catholic religion, and for clergymen to publish the banns of marriage between such persons, and that clergymen of the established church duly celebrating such marriages shall not be liable to any pain, penalty or censure for celebrating the same, any law to the contrary notwithstanding.

“ And whereas it is not any longer necessary to continue an act passed in the seventh year of the reign of King William the Third, entitled ‘ An act to restrain foreign education,’

“ Be it enacted that the same act be and is hereby repealed.

“ And whereas by act passed in the twenty-first and twenty-second years of his present Majesty’s reign, entitled ‘ An act to allow persons professing the Popish religion to teach school in this kingdom, and for regulating the education of Papists, and also to repeal parts of certain laws relative to the guardianship of their children,’ it is required that any person of the Popish religion who shall teach or keep school, shall first obtain the license of the ordinary of the diocese, and
whereas

whereas it is not expedient any longer to make such license necessary.

“ Be it enacted, that it shall not, from the passing of this act, be necessary that the license of the ordinary shall be obtained in order to authorize any person of the Roman Catholic religion to keep or teach school ; provided always that such person shall in all other respects perform the requisites required by and conform himself to the said last-mentioned act.

“ And whereas by an act passed in the eight year of Queen Anne, entitled ‘ An act for explaining and amending an act to prevent the further growth of Popery,’ it is enacted that no Papist or Papists who are or shall be permitted to follow any trade, craft or keep more than two apprentices, and that for no less a term than seven years.

“ Be it enacted that so much of the said act be and is hereby repealed.”

Sir Hercules then moved, that the bill be read a second time on Saturday next.

Mr. Staples said, he hoped full time would be allowed for the Members of that House to take the sense of the kingdom at large on a subject in which the Constituent Body were so deeply concerned ; for if ever there was a momentous subject before the Parliament of Ireland, it certainly was this ; and therefore it ought to be well known what the Protestants were willing to surrender, before the House should be determined to grant. He would ask the Right Hon. Gentleman who had seconded the motion for the Bill, whether the concessions which the Bill contained were sufficient to satisfy the Roman Catholics ? or whether these concessions were all that he intended to grant

grant them? He wished to know the *ne plus ultra*.

Hon. Denis Browne said, that if time only was desired to consider the purports of the Bill, the day proposed for the second reading by the *Hon. Baronet* was sufficient; if the intention was to suppress the Bill, certainly it would be better for that purpose to defer the relief intended to a more distant period. The question asked by the *Hon. Gentleman* of the *Right Hon. Secretary*, was singular—Whether he could answer, that the provisions of the Bill were to be the *ne plus ultra* of the Catholics? Certainly the *Right Hon. Gentleman* would find it difficult to answer for the future expectations of three millions of people. The Catholics offered as a security for their attachment to the Constitution, the approved loyalty of long and disturbed times. He said this was not the stage for debating this question; when that time came, he would offer his opinions on it; that he knew it would be impossible at any time to combat bigotry, prejudice, and love of power, by argument; but that it would be impossible for any exertion of human ingenuity or sophistry, to support the absurd principle of keeping a numerous and deserving description of our fellow-subjects, in the degraded situation they now stood.

Sir Hercules Langrishe said, it would have been impossible for him to answer the *Hon. Gentleman*, had not the declaration of an host of Roman Catholics already answered him in the public papers—“*That grateful for what had already been granted, they would with joy and humility receive whatever the wisdom and liberality of Parliament thought proper to bestow.*” As to the obscure and

and contemptible persons whose names filled the columns of newspapers, declaring a contrary sentiment, he had no regard to them, while his opinion was supported by the wise—the good—and the respectable.

Right Hon. Major Hobart said, he would not rise in the present stage of the Bill, but out of respect to the Hon. Gentleman who had called upon him. He said he would not have the presumption to answer for so great a body as the Roman Catholics; their good conduct for a series of years past, was at once the best proof of their wishes and their deserts. As to the question, whether this was to be the *ne plus ultra*, he would only say, that the House would never find him disposed to take any part without their full concurrence.

Mr. Vandeleur, though he approved the principle of the Bill, thought it a measure of such magnitude that the country ought to be consulted on it.

Right Hon. Mr. Ogle. Every man must see the necessity of giving full time for deliberation in the progress of this Bill. I think, Sir, that every *Protestant* in the land ought to be consulted on it; therefore let it be now printed and circulated through the country, as it would be extremely indecent to precipitate this business, without consulting our constituents. For myself, Sir, though I never refused the Roman Catholics every reasonable liberty, this Bill I think should be well weighed, and when we come to decide, I hope every gentleman will consult his own heart, and his own judgment upon it.

Sir Edward Newenham said, he hoped the number of copies to be printed of this Bill would not be limited to the number of Members of the House; every Protestant in Ireland had an interest in the Protestant Establishment, and should be consulted whether or not he was willing to resign that interest.

Sir Henry Cavendish said, he well recollected that the House some years since had put the nation to the cost of printing seven or eight thousand copies of a Bill, to be circulated among the people: He hoped they would not now do the same thing; but if any member, at his own expence, chose to print and circulate the Bill, he was at liberty so to do.

The Bill was ordered to be printed, and to be read a second time on Saturday.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 1792.

The Speaker having taken the chair,

The Right Hon. John O'Neill rose and said, he held in his hand a petition signed by six hundred inhabitants of the town of Belfast—many of whom he personally knew to be men of worth and respectability. It had been put into his hands by a very respectable body of these inhabitants, with a request that he would present it to the House of Commons; and with that request he

he thought it his duty to comply. He then read the prayer of the petition, which entreated that the Roman Catholics of Ireland might be restored to the rank and consequence of citizen subjects; and he moved that the petition be now received.

Sir Henry Cavendish hoped the Right Hon. Gentleman would be so good as to state the whole contents of the petition—it was strictly parliamentary so to do, and he hoped it contained nothing indecent or disrespectful to the dignity of parliament, like another petition which had been offered upon a former occasion. For he was confident the Right Hon. Gentleman who moved for its reception, regarded too much his own dignity, and that of the House, to give his sanction to any thing derogatory from either.

Mr. O'Neill then read the whole of the petition, which stated on the part of the petitioners, that their Roman Catholic brethren had long been, and still are in a degrading situation, from numerous restrictive and penal statutes hanging over them; and conscious as the petitioners were, that the prosperity, happiness, and improvement of this country must eventually depend on an union of interests among all religious denominations of the inhabitants, the petitioners therefore prayed, that the House would be pleased to repeal any restrictive statutes at present in existence against the Roman Catholics of Ireland, that they may be thus restored to the rank and consequence of citizens.

Sir Hercules Langrishe asked, if the petition came from the corporation of Belfast?

Mr. O'Neill answered, no; it was a meeting of the inhabitants, convened by public advertisement.

The Hon. Dennis Browne seconded the motion for the reception of the petition, and thought it was sufficient that the Right Hon. Gentleman who presented it, had stated it was signed by six hundred reputable inhabitants, without requiring the sanction of any corporate body to recommend it to the notice of the House. A former petition on this subject had been rejected, which he thought should have been received also, (a few voices on the treasury side of the House exclaimed, *no, no!*) I say, *yes!* gentlemen may cry, no, no—but that is no conviction. I say, Sir, when a Right Hon. Member of high respectability in this country, as well as in this House, presents a petition signed by the names of six hundred of his majesty's subjects, it ought to be received. I know well what has been the consequence of refusals on the part of parliament to hearken to the petitions of the people, and I know what was the consequence of such conduct with regard to America; I therefore cannot think, Sir, that because it has not the sanction of a corporation seal, it should therefore be rejected. It has the signatures of six hundred inhabitants, and that is, in my idea, enough to warrant its reception.

Sir Hercules Langrishe said, he was sorry to find it of late so very frequently necessary to recall the attention of gentlemen to a strict observance of the *orders of parliament*. That they were institutions of great wisdom, and if we were to suffer a neglect of them to grow on our proceedings, we should soon lose both our dignity and authority; that he considered the Hon. Member's

(Hon.

(Hon. D. Browne) doctrine about the reception of petitions not exactly conformable to the order of parliament; that when any member presents a petition, it is his duty (let it be subscribed by any person or persons however respectable) to state the *substance and prayer* of it, or to *read* it in his place, if required by any member; and for this reason, when the petition is presented, the Speaker puts the question, whether it shall be received; that the only materials the House had whereby to decide their vote on that question, were the representation of the contents, as stated by the member.—That the right of petitioning was too valuable not to be strictly ascertained and precisely known.—That the lowest member of the community was intitled to it, in his *individual capacity*, and as to *collective capacities*, they belonged only to *corporate bodies*, such as we can trace in our charters, or read of in our statute book, not to combinations and societies, self-created and self-incorporated. That, however, the present petition was signed by individuals, inhabitants of Belfast, and as such, he could have no objection to its being received; as to the contents, it was far from his mind to impute to the gentlemen who signed it, any other motive than they professed, or any purpose but the public good. He however could not avoid making some observations on the novelty of the connection, and the singularity of *one class* of men interceding in favour of *another*; and, he observed, whatever favourable intentions might be entertained by the petitioners towards their Catholic brethren, yet, for his part, if it was his wish to obstruct the progress of every favour to the Roman Catholics, now depending before parliament—if it was his wish to stop the growth of that conciliation and affection that were arising

in

in our breasts—if it was his wish to revive the prejudices that have so long kept us asunder, he would go to Belfast and sign this petition. That the Roman Catholics cannot, more than any other persons in the universe, be supposed so absurd as to entertain a *wish* for the continuance of any restrictions that may affect them, nor did they ever utter so *suspicious* a sentiment; yet they know too well what is due to the authority of the state to dictate to the wisdom of parliament, “They wish for a further repeal of the laws affecting them; but grateful for former concessions, they do not presume to point out the *measure* or *extent* to which such repeal should be carried, but confide in your liberality and benevolence, that it will be as extensive as you shall think prudent and expedient.”—This is the language of the constitution, which he hoped would recommend them to the favour of parliament.—He observed, that certainly this petition came before them under some favourable circumstances; it was presented by one of the most respectable men in the nation, and it came unattended by a certain commentary on it, which he had somewhere read, but which he was glad not to read now; because he was apprehensive the House would consider it a *libel on the proceedings of parliament*.

Some voice or other said—Serr, I have some abjekskins to state against the recepshin av that petishin—bekays, in my apinyin Serr, it is an *airy faubrick* and comes standing built upon a *rotten sandy foundation*. It comes from a body of min, Serr, who mortyilly hate the Roman *Kyothiliks* in their harts, and has no other object in the whole world

world, Serr, than kicking up of disturbinces—and therefore, Serr, it is an *oald* maxim—

“ Teemio Danauze, et *tela*—I mean, *dona ferintes**.”

[*A roar of laughter.*

I have very good raifins to blieve *Serr*, that there is no sincerety fatever at the *bottom* av this *petishin* : for I very well remimber, *Serr*, whin in *sevinty oit*—petishins came into this House craving some *relaxashins* in favour of the Roman Cathiliks—not like that now presinted which demands of us every thing—which I do not approve, *Serr*, bekafe he that gives all gives nothing! (a roar of laughter) I say, *Serr*, upon that *occazy*n those very min were the foremost to pass resolushins, and to instruct their rapprizintitives in this House, *Serr*, to appoaze the Roman Kyothiliks.—But when they saw the oald Protestant famlys av the country, *Serr*, ready to yield indulginzes and relaxashins to the Roman Cathilicks—what did they do? *Serr*—they emmedyitily pritinded to become their staunch frinds—and by strotigims and frauds, fell to *debauching* (a loud laugh) and defrauding thim.—They built *chopples* for thim, *Serr*—they wint to *myoss* with um, *Serr*—and all to create disturbince in the country. I refer you to what happened in Dungannon—I refer you to what occurred in 1783, when an unlawful assimbley was convened for the pritince of giving the Roman Kyothiliks *indulginzes*—but the real cause was to form agreements for the support of America, and to create disturbinces in this country; from that time to this, *Serr*, they have been endeavouring

* The old Trojan maxim we presume, but cloathed in a new dialect.

vouring to debauch the minds of the lower orders of the people, but their debauchery could only reach the lowest description of the mob, Serr—in short, Serr, every body who knows them, knows them to be a pack whom no king can govern, nor no *God* can please.

But, Serr, what is that petition?—It is to call upon a Protestant Pyarliament to grant what it cannot grant without subverting the Constitution.—To that Constitution, Serr, as established by our *gloryiz ants sisters*, my honour an my *alleagins* are pledged—and I will defend it with my *woice* in this House, and with the *strinth* of my *arum* out of this House.—And, Serr, if every man in this House feels it as I do—it should be kicked out at your baurr, Serr. A Protestant *pyaarlimint*, Serr, ought not to receive it—and for my part I am determined to divide the House upon it—and to give it my single negative if no body else does.

Sir Hercules Langrishe said, he did not object to the receiving the petition; he was only tenacious of parliamentary order.

Mr. Curran said, with respect to the object of the petition, something ought to be done for so loyal and respectable a body of subjects; but though much they deserved from the liberality of Parliament, that liberality was not to be pushed to the wildest extravagance. It was a subject on which no member could treat with too much deliberation, nor revolve too often in his mind before he speaks to it. He thought that every respectable body of his Majesty's subjects had a right to convey their sentiments to Parliament, and

and on this ground he was for receiving the petition. He thought the present a time when a man should be ashamed to sit silent on a subject of so much importance to the constitution and welfare of this country.

Right Hon. J. O'Neill. At the same time that I present the petition, I do not hold myself bound to support or oppose its principle. I was called upon, as I have said, by a number of persons, many of them my electors: I was not at this meeting; but I consider it as the right of the subject to petition. I have never declared my opinion on the subject to any man—I will reserve to myself the right of forming my opinion after full deliberation; and when I have formed the best opinion I can, I will declare it to the House.

I am extremely thankful for the kind and honourable expressions that Gentlemen have been pleased to use towards me; but I assure them, I did not rely upon any favourable reception through their personal regards for me—I took the petition merely as a point of duty.

The question was put “that the petition be received,” and carried, with Sir Boyle Roche’s single negative.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 18.

Mr. John O'Neill said he held in his hand a petition which he received by the post of this morning, which he was instructed to present to the House—it was signed by the names of 350

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Protestant

Protestant inhabitants, the Gentlemen, Clergy, and Freeholders of the four Lower Baronies of the county of Antrim; and would, he was assured, have been signed by a thousand had it not been for the shortness of time since they understood the Roman Catholic Bill was to have been debated this day.—

In the petition they state, they will feel themselves happy that the Roman Catholics should receive every liberal immunity consistent with the spirit of our glorious Constitution, and with the safety and interest of the Protestant religion. The petition was received and ordered to lie on the table.

Right Hon. Mr. Grattan gave notice, that in addition to the privileges now about to be granted to the Roman Catholics, the power of becoming Professors of Botany, Anatomy and Chemistry, should be given.

Hon. Mr. Knox said he also intended to propose that they should be permitted to take the academic degrees in the university of Dublin.

Hon. Denis Browne rose to say he would second both these intentions.

The Attorney General said, under the present laws of the University, Roman Catholics could not be admitted to take degrees without taking the oaths usually taken by Protestants; as the University is a corporation deriving by charter under the Crown, and governed by laws prescribed by its founder, it would not be very decorous for Parliament to break through those laws; but the King might, if such was his pleasure, direct

rect the College to dispense with these oaths—and in his opinion it would be wise to do so.

Mr. Knox said it was not his intention to infringe upon any prerogative of the Crown—but he could not see how this proposal was an infringement, as the Bill must in its ultimate stage pass under the inspection of the Crown, and receive the Royal assent, nevertheless, if any gentlemen of the University would rise and say that the wish of the University was to have these impediments removed, he would then not think it necessary to make the motion.

Sir Hercules Langrishe. The Bill is intended to remove certain disabilities which the Catholics (by law) labour under; now there is no law as to this point: When it became necessary for me in framing the Bill to search through the laws relative to Education, I found there was no law to prohibit Roman Catholics from taking degrees, but the rules of the University itself; these rules can be changed whenever the Crown shall think proper, but it would be very unbecoming for the Parliament to interfere.—As to the principle, there can be no difference of opinion—we differ only as to the mode of carrying it into effect.

Doctor Browne (College). I am unable to say what the sentiments of the heads of the College are upon this subject, as they have not informed me; but the reason the Right Hon. Gentleman has stated is certainly the true reason why Roman Catholics are not admitted to degrees:—If it shall be deemed expedient to admit them, the College must be much enlarged, and a greater number of Governors must be appointed. My own sentiment is, that such a measure would tend

much to remove prejudices, and to make them coalesce with Protestants ; this is my own sentiment, and the sentiment of several persons of the University, but I cannot say whether it be the sentiment of the majority. If the House shall think the measure expedient, they may address his Majesty to remove the oath which bars them from taking degrees.

PETITION OF ROMAN CATHOLIC COMMITTEE.

Mr. Egan held in his hand a petition which he said was signed by fifty of the most respectable commercial characters in this city, Roman Catholics, on behalf of themselves and their brethren throughout the kingdom.—In presenting this petition he considered himself as merely complying with his duty—he did not however hold himself bound to support its principle, nor to give any particular vote on the subject to come forward on this night, for on a subject of so much importance, he should consider it criminal to come pre-determined.

Mr. Egan then read the petition in his place, which is as follows :

*To the Right Hon. the Knights, Citizens, and Bur-
gesses, in Parliament assembled.*

THE PETITION of the undersigned ROMAN CATHOLICS, on behalf of themselves and the Roman Catholics of Ireland.

Humbly sheweth,

“ THAT as the House has thought it expedient
“ to direct their attention to the situation of the
“ Roman Catholics of Ireland, and to a further
“ relaxation of the penal statutes still subsisting
“ against

“ against them, they beg leave, with all humi-
 “ lity, to come before the House with the most
 “ heartfelt assurance of the wisdom and justice of
 “ Parliament, which is at all times desirous most
 “ graciously to attend to the petitions of the
 “ people; they therefore humbly presume to
 “ submit to the House their intreaty that they
 “ should take into their consideration whether
 “ the removal of some of the civil incapacities
 “ under which they labour, and the restoration
 “ the petitioners to some share in the elective
 “ franchise, which they enjoyed long after the
 “ revolution, will not tend to strengthen the
 “ Protestant State, add new vigour to industry,
 “ and afford protection and happiness to the Ca-
 “ tholics of Ireland; that the petitioners refer
 “ with confidence to their conduct for a century
 “ past, to prove their uniform loyalty and sub-
 “ mission to the laws, and to corroborate their
 “ solemn declaration, that if they obtain from
 “ the justice and benignity of Parliament, such
 “ relaxation from certain incapacities, and a par-
 “ ticipation in that franchise which will raise
 “ them to the rank of freemen, their gratitude
 “ must be proportioned to the benefit, and that
 “ enjoying some share in the happy Constitution
 “ of Ireland, they will exert themselves with
 “ additional zeal in its conservation.”

Mr. Egan then read the names signed to the
 petition, (those of the Roman Catholic Commit-
 tee) and he trusted the House would receive the
 petition, and decide on it with liberality.

Mr. Ogle. Sir, I do not rise to oppose the in-
 troduction of this petition—humble in its words,
 but bold in its tenor; but I rise to say that the
 claims that are every moment making on the
 Protestant

Protestant Ascendancy must be met; a line must be drawn somewhere, beyond which we must not recede—and I will caution gentlemen to be upon their guard. It is my intention when the Bill goes into committee, to move to expunge the present preamble, and introduce another for the purpose of maintaining the Protestant Interests of Ireland, and to prevent these new claims which every day produces. Every thing which you grant in compliance with those claims of the Roman Catholics is just so much lost to the Protestants who have sent us here; as one, I am determined to maintain their rights; and I think it my duty, even in these critical times, to shew that I am not afraid to meet and to repel claims injurious to their interest, and destructive of their ascendancy.

Sir, I have said that this is a petition humble in its words, but bold in its tenor; and I now add, it means much more than it professes—it is signed by certain individuals, but it comes indeed from a *Roman Catholic Convention* sitting in Dublin. It is true their claims are not so strongly expressed as when they told you “they must have *every thing*, and that they would persevere ’till they had totally overthrown your *ascendancy* ;” but such as it is, it must be met and opposed at any risk.

It is impossible to grant the Roman Catholics what they demand, if we at all regard the Protestant safety. My Hon. friend will see by the debate of this night, before to-morrow’s sun shall dawn he will be convinced of what I say—I do therefore call upon gentlemen to agree to a preamble which I intend to offer to the Bill, and which will pledge them no farther than to maintain that *Constitution* obtained for us by the virtue
and

and valour of *our great and good deliverer, King William the Third.*

Mr Egan. Sir, I do not present this petition from any Convention, or with any knowledge of its coming from a Convention—however, I will not abuse the word “Convention,” for I recollect that a Convention was the parent of the Revolution.

The Hon. Denis Browne (alluding to asperities from Mr. Ogle on a former night) said, when any member rose to express an opinion which happened to be against the caprice of some gentlemen, they were sure to encounter interruption and asperity. He hoped however, that as freedom of speech in Parliament was always allowed, even by the Crown—no member of that House would venture to encroach on the privilege. On the part of the Roman Catholics, he had to say, that in all the conversations he had ever held with men of that persuasion, and he had conversed with many of them of respectability and intelligence, not one had ever objected to the principle of Protestant ascendancy, and if he thought the Bill could have such a tendency, he would not vote for it.

Mr. Ogle, conceiving the Hon. Member alluded to him, was constrained to avow his objections to the Bill, because he conceived it injurious to the Protestant ascendancy—but with regard to extending the elective franchise to the Roman Catholics, he was convinced it could never be done, without overturning the Protestant ascendancy in every town in the kingdom.

The

The petition was received, read by the clerk and ordered to lie on the table.

On the Order of the Day for the House to resolve itself into a Committee of the whole House, to take into consideration a Bill to remove certain restraints and disabilities therein mentioned, to which his Majesty's subjects, professing the Popish religion, are now subject, being read ;—and on the Speaker putting the question, that he do now leave the chair,

Right Hon. Mr. Ogle said, he rose once more, not to enter into the principle of the Bill, he had already spoken his opinion on that point, but he rose to ask, whether under all the circumstances of the case, it was proper to pass any Bill at all this Session in favour of Roman Catholics? Every man who heard him was, he confessed, as good a judge as he; but though he would pay attention to the petitions of Roman Catholics, approaching the House in the modest language of humility, he never would yield when attacked under the banner of intimidation.

Mr. Denis Browne, Sir, I certainly did hear the Gentleman who spoke last, on a former night object to the principle of this Bill, and say, he would oppose it, but I do not recollect that he assigned any reason for his intention. I do hear him this night object to it, because he thinks it's purports injurious to the Protestant ascendancy, but why it will be injurious to that ascendancy he has not stated; indeed it would be difficult, at this day of the world, to reason against toleration, or at any day of the world, to find in the Bill introduced matter injurious to the Protestant ascendancy.—If ever the principle of toleration,

in its most liberal ample construction, was more necessary for one country than another, it is in this.

Mr. Ogle. I certainly did say, and I am still of the same opinion, that it is not in human wisdom to pass a Bill granting such privileges to Roman Catholics without injury to the Protestant ascendancy.

Mr. Browne. I will not urge on this question a word of abstract right; regulated society has rights superior to all natural rights, and inasmuch as regulation and good order are superior to their direct reverse, so far is practical establishment superior to the wild theories of reasoning. Ill-judging speculators, who, having no connections to society themselves, wish to strike out new systems and new worlds in which they may have such, without which there must always be a want in the mind of man. The principle is narrowed to two points:—first, whether it is the interest of this country to grant ample and full participation of its rights to the Roman Catholics; next, whether doing so, will probably be injurious to the Protestant ascendancy. Sir, this kingdom from the conquest, has been torn by internal dissention: first, between the English invader and Irish natives, to the reign of Elizabeth; and from that time, to the auspicious period of 78, by the religious difference between the English Protestant and Irish Catholic. In this quarrel, more fierce and inexorable than the former, fell your national character, your trade and constitution; there was no common interest; your lands remained uncultivated; the face of your country was marked by your divisions; you were known to the world only as a British province, (as emphatically de-

cribed by Lord Clarendon) "Ireland, a gulph that swallowed all that could be had, and all that could be got from England, merely to keep up, the reputation of a kingdom." Since when did you emerge from this state of desolation and rise in consequence? From the time that your religious difference abated; Since when did your country begin to look up? Since when was your trade obtained and established? Since when were your laws respected, your property become valuable? Since when were you considered as a rising country, in the scale of the world? Since the period of 72, when by allowing the Catholics to acquire property in your country, you added them to the firm of the constitution. The effects of toleration on the prosperity of the world, is established by the experience of ages; its effects are most recent, and most known in this country; and the inference that I think can be fairly and fully drawn from this statement of facts is, that it will be for the advantage of Ireland, for its Parliament, by the most liberal concessions, to give this great body of people an interest in this land, that will, as I think and trust, raise us to a degree of happiness and consequence, that the most sanguine have never expected.

Sir, in my opinion, the wishes of the Roman Catholics have been misrepresented and misunderstood. They never contended with the Protestant interest for ascendancy. They are satisfied that you should enjoy that superiority of rights you are attached to, and that you have possessed since the reign of Elizabeth. They only desire of you to remove from them, in days of union and light, those restrictions that were imposed on them in the days of darkness and division, that are materially injurious to ourselves, inasmuch as they drive half the ability of the land from its service,

service, and they do not think your doing so would be injurious to your ascendancy; and reasoning from facts, they tell you, that when they had more of power than they now demand by their petition, or have ever any way demanded, your ascendancy was preserved; when they had members in your Parliament, and elected your Parliaments, no less than thirty-nine penal laws passed against them, depriving them of all the rights of nature; driving them from habitations that their forefathers had colonized and inhabited; proscribing the priests of their religion as noxious animals; altering modes of trial in their disfavour, finally preventing them from acquiring property in their native land, and of all rights in its legislation. They tell you the land is in the hands of the Protestants, that a Protestant government and Church, and your connexion with England must preserve your ascendancy. Whatever privileges you extend to the Roman Catholics, relax the laws that prevent the exertion of the Roman Catholics in the cause of Ireland, and that exertion will be found. Experience has proved to you that their exertion will never be used but for the support of your establishment—in times of threatened danger and invasion they have proved it—they stood foremost in the ranks of your national army, and never remembered a grievance of their own in times of common danger. I am happy to find from the side of the House the petition had been presented whence that the Roman Catholics have friends; all I can say is, that their exertion has been rather tardy, if it be meant to persuade the Roman Catholics that they are their friends. The bill does not go as fully as I could wish for the relief of the Roman Catholics, but its purports are benefits, and will

be a bright feature in the character of Lord Westmorland's Government.

Sir Hercules Langrishe could not perceive either in the principle or in the tenor of the bill any ground for the objections of his Rt. Hon. Friend, (Mr. Ogle)—If he did not very well know the principles and sentiments of the Roman Catholics to be the reverse of those imputed to them, he never would have come forward on their behalf. He came to the House from Roman Catholics—not dictating to Parliament, but professing themselves grateful for past favours, and disclaiming the presumption of pointing out to Parliament any measure of relaxation, but relying on the wisdom and generosity of the House for such indulgences as it should deem consistent with the circumstances of the times, and with giving their past as a pledge of their future conduct. He desired not to put *authority* into their hands, but implements of industry for the improvement of our arts, and such professional privileges as should induce them to spend lives in their native land, and devote their talents to the service of their country. He desired to level the wall of separation that divided the people from each other, to unite them in the ties of human happiness, and no longer by refusing them the benefits of education at home send them abroad; on these grounds he hoped the bill would no farther be opposed by his Right Hon. Friend.

Mr. Hardy said, that he was in a great measure anticipated in what he meant to say by the Hon. Baronet, (*Sir H. Langrishe*) who had just sat down, he said he rose particularly then, to take notice of something that had fallen from the Right Hon. Gentleman (*Mr. Ogle*) over the way,
who

who seemed averse to proceeding on the bill at all, or to the Speaker's leaving the chair. If, Mr. Hardy said, the bill went to an entire and abrupt relaxation of all the laws affecting the Roman Catholics, in that case he would agree with the Right Hon. Gentleman, as to the propriety of postponing the bill till next session; for however decided his disapprobation was of the entire code of Roman Catholic laws, he would not presume on that opinion in the least, to give his assistance to a sudden breaking down of them all; on the contrary, the relaxation of those laws must be, as it has hitherto and wisely been, gradual, and any bill that went against that system, required deep consideration.—But as the present bill went only to a few propositions, to a few just and proper concessions, which, with some modifications, would in all probability meet the general concurrence of the House, in that case, and considering that the House had now sat for more than a month, and been in possession of the subject for more than three weeks, he thought that there was no reasonable ground for delay; but on the contrary, what seemed to be generously relinquished, should be speedily, though not precipitately granted.—He therefore was for going into the committee directly. The Right Hon. Gentleman spoke of alarms and apprehensions which had gone abroad and disturbed the peace of the country; that was with him a decided reason for going into the bill; for, when he looked round him, however little disposed to any thing like adulatory language, he had no difficulty in saying, that the present House of Commons, whatever faults it might be liable to, possessed at least as much genius, good sense, and as much Parliamentary knowledge and experience as any House that had preceded it, and therefore, he was not afraid,

with

with such aids, and such qualifications, for the discussion of any bill, to meet that particular bill; it would be discussed, he hoped, with temper and fairness, and that discussion would go farther in quieting any alarms and apprehensions, than any thing else possibly could.

Another reason had been adduced against the entertaining this bill—the violent language held out by the Roman Catholics.—Mr. Hardy said he had read many of their publications; the language of some of them, and the sentiments which they contained, met his approbation.—Others he could not say so much for, they were wild, visionary, and indiscreet. But admitting that they were highly exceptionable in many respects, was the good conduct of a century to be effaced by the warm language of a day? And if the House of Commons entertained favourable sentiments of the Roman Catholics in general, could they have a stronger inducement to go into the bill than the very reason which is adduced to dissuade them from it? For if the Roman Catholics have made use of indiscreet language, or if they have fallen into bad company, who made use of this language for them, surely, in that case, it would be peculiarly incumbent on Parliament to take them out of the hands of such people, as soon as possible, and by a generous and just policy towards them, to invite them to an early confidence in Parliament, to the entire exclusion of all such dangerous auxiliaries, who would only injure their cause instead of supporting it. As to the particular clauses of the bill, he would, with the indulgence of the House, speak to them in the committee.

Colonel Blaquiere said, he thought something should be done for the Roman Catholics, and that

that Protestants ought to yield such things as were not unreasonable: The objects which had been introduced by the Hon. Baronet with such *radiance of intellect*, in his opinion, ought to be granted by the House, as a reward for their long obedience, and for their having for so many years complied with every proposition of Administration. The Hon. Baronet has explained the bill in such a *lucid manner*, that he had left little for any one else to say; this, however, he would add, that he was confident it would lead the Roman Catholic to contentment, but would not introduce him to power.

Mr. Ruxton said, he would never regulate his public duty by private feeling—and on the present occasion he thought he could not perform that duty in any way more properly than in obstinately and vigorously opposing the bill.—For how was it the House were called on to relax the severities complained of? Was it because the Catholics had formed themselves into bodies, and signed declarations, manifestoes, and other such compositions, libellous on Parliament and the constitution.—They did not solicit, as indulgence, but they demanded as right, that which could only flow as a boon from the benignity and not from the pusillanimity of Parliament. They laboured, it was true, under certain disabilities, but they were such as ought to be imposed on men professing such religious sentiments. They enjoyed, nevertheless, liberty of conscience, and protection of property equally with any other class of their fellow subjects, and could have no real grievance to lament, except that of obeying they sceptre they wished to sway.

He therefore was averse to the present bill, because he thought it dangerous to the constitution,

tion, in shaking those props by which it had been so long supported.

Mr. Staples thought the present bill was introduced under a mandate of a British minister, and as such supported by administration here, rather than as a measure in which the sense of Parliament, or the Protestant interests were consulted. He wished to know if any farther concessions to Roman Catholics were intended, or if any line was to be drawn, in order to mark out the ultimate boundary of such measures—and he signified his wish of moving some strong declaratory clause in the preamble of the bill on this head.

Mr. Coote said, that conscious as he was of the spirit of the House to resist every measure injurious to the Protestant and constitutional interests of the country, he had no objection to the committal of the bill—nor to the indulgence of the Roman Catholics in every privilege consistent with the principles of Protestant ascendancy and constitution in church and state. The Roman Catholics of rank who have come forward with an Address to the Government of the country—with an address expressive of gratitude for past benefits, and reliance on the wisdom and liberality of their Protestant countrymen for future, ought to be treated with every degree of respect and indulgence: But there are men in this country that would level all distinctions, and throw our glorious Constitution in the dust; to such the slightest concession never should be made.

Mr. Secretary Hobart, in answer to what had fallen from *Mr. Staples*, said, he knew of no concessions intended to Roman Catholics, but what
were

were mentioned in the bill proposed by his Right Hon. Friend, and to those, so far as he could collect, the general sense of the House was favourable; but with respect to the measure of drawing any line for the future conduct of Parliament on this topic, it was a measure he would never presume to attempt. With respect to mandates of a British minister on the subject, he knew of none.

Mr. Staples replied, he thought it would have been but decent on the part of Administration, to have consulted the sense of the Protestant gentlemen of the country, before such a measure was brought forward.—He thought the opinion of every Protestant of property in the country ought to have been previously consulted—but he feared it was a measure of absolute command from a British minister, and therefore hoped the spirit of the House would resist it.

Sir Thomas Osborne. The Bill being brought forward by the advice of that most able Minister, should have his assent.

Mr. Sheridan. On entering Parliament he formed this resolution, that no apprehension should silence, no temptation lure him—he should not, however, have spoken on the subject, in its present stage, if an answer had been given to the question put by his Hon. friend, and if an Hon. Baronet had not said, “The Bill has my approbation, because introduced under the direction of the British Minister,” whom he is pleased to stile “most able.”

Sir Thomas Osborne. I did not say direction, I said advice.

Mr. Sheridan. If I were compiling a dictionary, I think I should best explain “advice of a Minister” by the single word *COMMAND*.—It is but justice to the Hon. mover of this Bill to say every one must approve the *manner* in which it was introduced by him; he brought it forward with all the good sense of an experienced senator, and all the embellishments of an elegant classical mind—he was happy in the particular circumstances attending it on the night of its introduction, and surely all must admire and respect the cool but decided spirit, which seemed to possess almost every member in the House.—If the agitated subject out of doors relating to the Roman Catholics, has not only been injurious to their own, but also to the public cause, by dulling the public mind to objects of great magnitude—if so circumstanced, Administration has obtained what is called a quiet session—still he could congratulate his country on some discoveries derived from her present situation. It is now apparent, that no body of men, however composed, directed or advised, can with success *dictate* to the Legislature: the more turbulent their resolves, the weaker will be their effect:—and it is now apparent, that there are questions on which no Government, however strong, or however inclined, dare venture.—He said, he spoke in general, and did not apply it now; but if, in a future session of Parliament, some Scotch Secretary in England, envious of the tranquil state of this country, and even of her slow growing prosperity, if jealous on the idea of Ireland’s imperial crown, his country having only a moiety in one, he should see in perspective (a paradox in expression, but a certain in event) A UNION produced by DISSENTION;—if in a future session such a Minister should send his Cardinal Legate, or Nuncio, to negotiate

negociate with the great body of the Roman Catholics of this kingdom, who are at present politically separated from their political brethren by the laws and policy of the state, if this envoy should offer this great body of the people to Government, upon the small sacrifice of the Protestant interest; if this envoy should insinuate, “ if you do not receive them, opposition perhaps will;”—why, this Ambassador *extraordinary* might depart unmolested by a Chief Justice’s warrant, or an Attorney General’s information; there being no danger in the business, might justify the inattention of the law officers—he might depart contrary to his mission, *in peace*, to Paris—to that beautiful meteor the Queen of France—to Coblentz—to Marshal Broglio, or the Pope. The Roman Catholics of Ireland may now learn, that it is to the wisdom and liberality of the PROTESTANTS OF IRELAND they ought to look, and that foreign or ministerial negotiation must be ever suspicious and never successful;—every man must agree, that they are entitled to every benefit and advantage compatible with the preservation of the Protestant ascendancy; but as he knew “ Protestant ascendancy,” might be used perhaps by some in a very narrow, and by others in a too enlarged sense, he begged leave to submit his idea of Protestant ascendancy to the House:—by Protestant ascendancy he meant, a Protestant King, to whom only being Protestant we owed allegiance—a Protestant House of Peers, composed of Protestant Lords Spiritual in Protestant succession, of Protestant Lords Temporal, with Protestant inheritance; and a Protestant House of Commons, elected and deputed by Protestant constituents—in short, a Protestant Legislative, a Protestant Judicial, and a Protestant Executive, in all and each of their varieties, degrees, and gradations.

He knew there were some who would stile this prejudice; it might be so, but it had grown up with him, and it was the best conclusion his understanding could enable him to make, from no inattentive consideration on the subject.—There were some, he was sorry for it, who think religion a prejudice, and he had read works where the authors would seriously inculcate this doctrine, that a religion of the State was an idle idea; among the splendid impositions of Gibbon the Historian, who sacrifices much to composition and stile of expression, we find “Rome become the common temple of her subjects, and all the Gods of mankind were free of the city,” what kind of body politic a corporation of Gods would make in any State, and how an aristocracy of deities might be relished in a Republic, is a pleasant *speculative* subject. At this day he believed the best, the most wise and most moral opinion is, that religion is essential in society, and where there are several sects, one must necessarily be paramount—the present Bill invited no further observation, there were four propositions; three were innocent, perhaps desirable; one was striking, he meant the bar, on which he had not yet a decided opinion, but in Committee it would be coolly and fully investigated.

Mr. Michael Smyth. Relaxed and exhausted from a variety of causes, which it would be arrogant in me to trouble the House by stating, it was not my intention to have obtruded upon you this night, but from the turn which the debate has latterly taken; I feel it my duty, before it concludes, to solicit the permission of the House to submit to them very briefly my humble thoughts upon the principle of the present Bill. From the line of my profession I have, Sir, upon several occasions,

occasions, been forced into an intimate consideration of that code of laws distinguished by the name of the Popery Laws,—by which means I became enabled to form, and am, I think, now not altogether incompetent to deliver a tolerably adequate opinion of their nature and their character.—Sir, I never read them but with horror, nor reflected upon them but with a mingled sensation of sorrow and of shame. I hailed the relaxation of them as the auspicious *dawn*—and I looked, *and do look*, to their utter and final abrogation, as to the *meridian glory* of my country's welfare and prosperity.

Imprest with these sentiments, I could not but rejoice when the Hon. Baronet who first moved this Bill, introduced it into the House; and I instantly determined, if necessary, to give it my feeble, though best support; while at the same time I fondly hoped that being, as I deemed it, in its nature highly expedient, in its concessions extremely moderate, and in its consequences likely to be eminently salutary, it would not only escape every thing like angry opposition, but pass into a law in all the dignity of unanimous and universal approbation.

The objects which this Bill embraces are but few; it proposes to admit our Roman Catholic brethren into the profession and practice of the law in all its various departments; to enable them also to establish literary seminaries and academies for the instruction and education of their own youth; and to permit intermarriages of Protestants and Roman Catholics; with some subordinate provisions, on which I mean not at present to trouble the House with my observations. As to the first and second of these measures, justice and humanity, as well as sound policy, forbid all resistance to them. We all know

know that arts and sciences, like soils, are best improved by culture; nor is the prosperity of a nation more marked by the number and industry of its citizens, than the perfection of science is insured by the multitude and competition of its students and its votaries. Just Heaven! Sir, is the “ample page of knowledge” to be withheld for ever from our Roman Catholic fellow citizens? As to them, are the sacred fountains of science and of truth to be for ever dried up? Is more, much more than half the genius of the land to be condemned to pine and languish in obscurity for ever?—for ever to

“ ————— blush unseen,

“ And waste its sweetness on the desert air.”

Or is to be for ever banished from our hospitable shores, to seek a wretched asylum in some distant land, until happily at length impelled and elevated by its native energy, it may serve to dignify some foreign court, or to illuminate some other hemisphere?—Forbid it, Heaven! Forbid it the justice and humanity of my country! Forbid it every motive, and every principle that ought to sway the human heart, or guide the human intellect!—No, Sir, we will admit, cheerfully admit our Roman Catholic brethren into the profession of the law; we will receive them with open arms; we will enable and encourage them to qualify for that important station; we will contend and struggle with them in the honest and honorable pursuits of fortune and of fame; and if vanquished in the strife, we will join with the surrounding world in admiring those talents which, though we could not equal, we dared to emulate.

With

With respect to the intermarriages of Protestants and Roman Catholics, I feel assured it is a measure that can never meet resistance within those walls—In a country eminently distinguished by the beauty of its women and gallantry of its men, shall it be adjudged criminal to admire that form, whose

“——Every step is grace; every look is love;

“And every gesture dignity and love!”

Shall it be deemed a breach of allegiance to pay homage to beauty? Shall loyalty be set at variance with nature? Shall our gracious Sovereign be forced to dispute titles with the “mighty monarch of the human heart?” And shall love in Ireland—shall love—be made little less than high treason by law? Why, Sir, the punishment of Tantalus was mercy to this. Such horrid laws find their remedy in their impotence—their cruelty defeats and destroys their effect, and they become inoperative, because they are unnatural. Where God and nature enjoin admiration and esteem, it is vain, as well as sinful, in law to prohibit union. The instinctive passions of the human heart will force their way in spite of every cruel effort to check or to subdue them; and when indulged—when virtuously and honourably indulged—gracious Heaven! shall all their *holy joys*—shall all their *sacred and mysterious raptures* be, by a merciless law, converted into *pains and penalties*? Shall the nuptial torch serve only to light its unoffending, yet unhappy, votaries to their *temporal undoing*? And shall the doating husband be forced to contemplate in the person of his lovely wife, the fatal drag, cast upon his honest ambition;—the beauteous, innocent, pitiable burthen that is to weigh him down in life, and mar his fortune and his fame for ever.

Away

Away with such abominable laws! Away with such savage legislation;—and away—for ever away with such mischievous and such merciless policy. Let us, I conjure the House by the sacred names of charity and benevolence! Let us maintain the cause and assert the honest, virtuous claims of nature—Let us abjure all tyranny over the human heart and vindicate and protect these amiable and irresistible attachments which are the prime sources, not only of all domestic happiness, but also of all national strength, prosperity, and glory. Let us once more throw wide the golden gates of hallowed love, and let Hymeneal songs and the sympathetic murmurs of united hearts render “our groves harmonious.”

I fear I have trespassed on the attention of the House too long, and shall therefore hasten to conclude; but before I resume my seat, let me in the most solemn, yet in the most suppliant manner, entreat of those gentlemen who may be apprehensive of the consequence of the present bill, that while they regard, with a steady eye, the *Protestant interest*, they do not overlook the *Roman Catholic virtue*; that in their anxiety to preserve what is called the *Protestant ascendancy*, they forget not to alleviate the *Roman Catholic grievances*; so that while one party shall be happy in the possession of prerogative, the other may be contented in the participation of privilege,—always remembering that kindness on the one hand, will not, cannot fail of producing gratitude on the other—until, after a lengthened period of mutual harmony, cordiality, and affection, that happy moment, so much, so devoutly to be wished for by every real friend of this country, shall arrive, when the divided names of Protestant and Roman Catholic shall be heard no more, but mellowed and melted away, shall finally lose themselves

selves in the more endearing, glorious, and divine appellations of—Friend—Brother—~~and~~ Fellow Christian. **and Irishman!**

Colonel Hutchinson. As other Gentlemen have spoken at large on the principle of this Bill, I shall take the liberty of doing the same.—This great subject requires unequivocal, and decisive language :—I shall speak my sentiments upon it with the utmost submission, but with the utmost firmness ; I may value your applause ; but I should be unworthy of a seat in this House, if I could fear your censure, when I acted in conformity to the dictates of my judgment, after the best consideration I could give an important question—the opinions which on this night I shall mention, I adopted in early youth—my manhood has confirmed them ; I am confident they are founded on the immutable principles of truth and reason ; I shall therefore never cease to cherish them 'till I cease to exist.

Unfortunately for this country, those jealousies between Catholics and Protestants, which every good man hoped were buried in oblivion, are now rising again—I accuse no man either within these walls or without them, but I implore the attention of you all, and trust that this will prove a contest, not of passion, but of reason—not of prejudice but of argument ; fears have been mentioned in this capital, and in this House, of dangers threatening the Protestant ascendancy ; these sentiments have extended themselves to the utmost corners of the island, and have been reverberated back again to us.—Relying on the wisdom of this House, and on the moderation of the Protestants of Ireland, I will hope that this heated collision between the constituent and the representative body, shall never create a flame which may

devour and consume this ill-fated country—I certainly have to regret that this great subject has not been canvassed with that temper which the investigation of truth and fair discussion naturally require; but as I do not feel these apprehensions, and cannot see any danger which could arise to the Protestant establishment from the further emancipation of the Catholic body, I must beg leave to state my reasons why I am of this opinion, and to answer several objections which have been made to the adoption of such a measure.

I shall vote for the comittal of this Bill—the only objection that I can have to it is, that it does not go far enough;—it embraces four objects,—the right of taking apprentices, and of keeping schools, the power of intermarriages, and of being called to the bar—I really thought that a Bill so harmless, so innocent, so inoffensive—a Bill which gives so little, and that little so reasonable, might have passed into a law without objection and without debate.—The ingenuity of Gentlemen would probably have been at a loss, if the favourite topic of the Protestant ascendancy had not suggested itself—In this manner of reasoning, I acknowledge there is much philosophy and depth of thought: for the Protestant mechanic will assuredly find, the Protestant ascendancy in the monopoly of trade; and the Protestant School-Master will use his learning to discover this same ascendancy in the monopoly of teaching.—Beauty, honor, virtue, truth, might possibly in the person of a woman and a wife convince a Protestant husband, that though a Catholic was not to be trusted with power or office, a person of that religion might constitute the joy the pride, the happiness, the consolation of domestic life.—If the law were a profession
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of less liberality, the Protestant barrister might search for this same ascendancy, in the depression of the industry and the abilities of his Catholic brother—Certainly the preservation of this ascendancy is the material object to which every other consideration must be sacrificed; yet still I am not able to divest my mind entirely of the idea, that the general prosperity of the great body of the people is something:—Impressed with this opinion I would wish to annihilate monopoly; because I know that trade droops—I would give every man the benefit that might accrue from his superior knowledge, and promote learning by competition, because it is with difficulty to be found in this land; it has never taken root, but has languished for want of encouragement, or sought refuge in foreign and more congenial climates—I would suffer Protestants and Catholics to intermarry, because though the offices, the honors, the power, the authority of the State ought certainly to be in the hands of the few, yet I have heard and read that it is the union, and not the separation, the agreement, and not the dissention of the many, which must constitute the strength of the nation.—I would open the bar to them, because I would wish to call Catholic eloquence to the support of Protestant liberty—great is the succour, great is the security, which countries derive from the possession of men of talents; they are their natural guardians, protectors and defenders; in bad times they shield the people against the encroachments and corruptions of bad governments, or interfere between themselves and their prejudices.

I hear with amazement the daily cant that the Catholic is not persecuted, because he enjoys his liberty and his property in as much security as the Protestant; but in my opinion every disability

for religious belief is persecution.—It is buzzed in my ear, that every man in this House is as tolerant as I am, and that it is a contest for power and not for religion—it matters little to the world whether you change the name of things or not, provided the effect still continues the same—it may be contest for power but it is founded on religious difference—you may argue round the circle, but I still bring you back to the point of religion.—For my part, I have not a mind sufficiently expanded to comprehend the force of this reasoning—I cannot conceive the absolute necessity that Protestants should exterminate Catholics, or Catholics Protestants—may they not flourish together and divide this their country between them? Deny the position and you blasphame the Common Father of both—I do allow that all these contests were originally contests of power—the Reformation was opposed by most of the Sovereigns of Europe, who thought it dangerous to their power that their subjects should use the light of their own reason, and that all habits of discussion, were inimical to despotism—the clergy availed themselves of their influence over a laity, ignorant and superstitious, and lighted up the fires of persecution, not because they feared God or hated man, but because they loved power.

It appears at first not a little surprising, that a difference of opinion among Divines, whether a text of Scripture ought to be construed figuratively or literally, should have created such animosities—the absurdity of such a cause of contest is lost in the immensity of mischief it has done—for think as you please, and say what you will, this is the difference, the real and substantial difference which has caused that immense separation between the Catholic and Protestant Church, which

which nor time, nor reason, nor philosophy have yet been able to close.

The oppression of Catholic Governments on their subjects who do not profess the religion of the State, has always been the object of the reprobation of the Protestants, and too often of their imitation—England has shared in this disgrace, but you have exceeded all other nations—your old sanguinary code still remains on your Statute Book;—inspect it again, if the tear of humanity shall not blot the pages and conceal from your sight the disgrace of your ancestors, and the oppressions and calamities of their fellow-subjects, and then if you are inclined for panegyric and self-applause, you may boast of the mercy and long suffering of the Protestant religion—but if you have been tolerant I do not know what persecution is—you refuse the Catholic toleration for his religion, arms for his personal defence, the right of purchase in the country in which he had been born and bred, and any landed security for his money—when with his industry cramped, his person in danger and his conscience in fetters, he retired to his house for comfort and relief, what were his feelings, what were his apprehensions? He found that the bloody spirit of your inquisitorial Legislation had entered before him, the suspicion which you had created dashed every joy of his life, and embittered every prospect of futurity—in his friend or his servant he saw an informer, in his wife the mother of him who might become his bitterest enemy and despoiler; the usual connections and gradations of human life were reversed; the parent was made to depend on the child, and not the child on the parent; the fondest parent surveyed with doubt and melancholy the opening talents of his offspring—he knew that if his son should prove valiant or enterprising,

enterprising, his country rejected his services, and that he must either pine at home in inactivity, or live an exile in a foreign country—if he should be wise or eloquent he could not raise his voice in those very courts of justice which were to determine on his property, his honor, his liberty, and his life, without a renunciation of the faith of his ancestors—So that a father in the bitterness of his anguish, was obliged to hope that his son should prove an idler, lest he should become an exile, or an apostate.—I shall be told that the enlightened wisdom of a late Parliament did away some of those obnoxious laws; but it ought to diminish the exultation of your triumph, when you recollect that this repeal was opposed with much obstinacy and spirit, and that the downfall of the Protestant religion, and of the Protestant establishment was predicted, as soon as the Catholic body only should be restored to what will now appear to you to be the common and natural rights of men—When therefore such has been your conduct, and such your legislation, you must acknowledge that persecution has been, and still is established by law amongst you—After such a degrading confession, is it any palliation to your offences, that other religions have adopted a conduct more ferocious than yours? have you no other defence to make for the honor of yourselves and your ancestors, for the wisdom of your government, for the dignity of your Parliament, for the justice of your nation, than that others have been more wicked than you? some of those nations have made an honorable reparation to the cause of injured humanity; if you followed their example when they were wrong, you ought not to reject it now that they are right—The history of christianity has not been very honorable to the professors of that religion; all sects of christians

tians have been in their turns persecutors ; they can only dispute concerning the quantum of mischief they have done.

In order originally to justify this penal code, it was found necessary to represent the Catholics as the enemies of civil liberty, and the constitution ; as the adherents of a detested family ; as holding doctrines erroneous, dangerous and wicked ; all which circumstances rendered it unsafe for a Protestant government to place any confidence in them—you cannot now accuse them of holding doctrines dangerous to liberty, or of being enemies to the constitution ; after you adopted them at Dungannon, after you enrolled them among your volunteers, after you marched embodied together, to commerce and to constitution—whether in later times they have been the adherents of the expelled families, their conduct for a century, during which period two rebellions raged in England, best can answer ; whether they ever held or continued to hold these wicked, dangerous, and erroneous positions—such as, that faith was not to be kept with hereticks, that persons might be absolved from their oath, and that princes excommunicated by the pope might be deposed and murdered by their subjects—let your wisdom your candour and your truth pronounce, after you have considered that these doctrines were never received or acknowledged by any Catholic church, and have lately been solemnly denied, rejected and abjured by the principal universities of Europe, by those of that persuasion in England, and not now maintained by any, the most groveling papist.

It is stated, if not as a crime, at least as an insuperable objection to Catholics, that their ancestors once possess the government, and the property of this country—during that period your
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candour must induce you to acknowledge that they often resisted the encroachments of England, and endeavoured to assert and maintain the independence of their Legislature—the rebellion of Forty-one, and the revolution, deprived them of all power, and in a great degree, with some few exceptions, of property; the power and the property were transferred to Protestant hands; it is argued, that if the Catholics should ever acquire sufficient weight in the government, they will overturn this settlement, and restore this property to the original proprietors—this fear appears to me to be imaginary, when all the circumstances are weighed without passion, and without prejudice—The first of these forfeitures is in the possession of Protestants for near a century and a half, the latter a century—the families of many of the original proprietors are extinct, or their representatives foreigners, residing in foreign countries—the Catholics themselves have purchased some of these estates, and will probably in course of time purchase many more of them; they have lent their money on this security; it never can be the interest of the great body of that persuasion to excite a general convulsion, in which their fortunes and the fruits of their industry might be swallowed up, solely for the purpose of benefiting the few—A nation is not to be put in motion, except by grievances which are severely felt by the whole mass of the community, and by causes which are of general, not of partial operation—The great share of property would still be in the Protestant hands; and property gives power—the disposal of office would still be in the Protestant government, and office gives influence, the command of the Irish army would still belong to you—the navy, the land force, the formidable and illustrious names of Britain, together with

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ten millions of Protestants would still be at your back—let me ask you then, is your situation so critical and so dangerous, that you dare not be just?

It is possible, I allow, that the hard necessity of the times, the prevalence of bigotry, and superstition, and the unenlightened spirit of the age, which rejected all principles of toleration, might once have palliated those laws; but if they were necessary in a period of comparative darkness, in a period of discord, revolution and blood, ought they to be continued when these causes, which originally might have justified them, have long since ceased to operate? Posterity, when it shall weigh in a just and impartial balance, the merits and demerits of the different generations which have gone before them, shall consider the enacting of this code, as the misfortune of your ancestors, but the continuance of it, as your disgrace—He may be a zealous Protestant, but he is not a zealous advocate for truth, who is unwilling to acknowledge, that the sentiments of mankind on the subject of religious differences have materially changed, and that all the circumstances attending these contests in Ireland, are exactly the reverse of what they were.—The spirit of the Catholic religion is softened and refined; the influence of the pope, feeble, as the feeble and decrepid hand that wields it; his power overthrown in France, tottering in Germany, resisted in Italy, and formidable no where.—The succession is now undisputed, all ranks and religions vying in their attachment to the present family on the throne; we are not now cursed with a pretender to our crown, who was supported by a great body of adherents in England, and in Scotland, and by the whole force of the most mighty monarch in Europe.—In some sequestered corner of the

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land, among the old women of the island there may possibly still exist a Jacobite—Danger no longer threatens you; peace smiles upon you; why then do you still continue to sound the trumpet of war?

Examine well your own situation, and the situation of surrounding Europe. Reflect that this is an age of reason—Men seriously consider and speculate upon the various duties and obligations of government—Old establishments are no longer to be defended by their rust and antiquity, but by truth and reason—Try your penal code by this criterion, and he must be stupid indeed who is not able to find an answer for all your assertions—Your clamours and your prejudices, your high sounding expressions and your tones of authority may frighten the timid, but they will neither silence the bold, nor convince the reasonable—I am told that under this system of government, the country has thriven, and is still in a state of rapid improvement and prosperity—True it is, the vices of your political constitution have not been able entirely to blast the gifts of providence, they have only checked their growth, and retarded their progress; but a people possessing such energy of character as to be able to fight up against such oppressions, surely deserve more favorable treatment—Are they unfit for liberty, because slavery itself has only been able to deface, and not intirely to destroy the native and inherent vigour of their minds? There is I suppose no man who now contends that a Catholic is not as fit for, and does not love liberty as much as a Protestant—But it has been said that the Irish Catholic is a bigot, ignorant and superstitious, who does not deserve freedom, and who ought not to be trusted with power—You of the Protestant ascendancy breath the same air, and inhabit the same

same country, and you are wise, free, and enlightened—from whence then does the degradation of the Catholic proceed? It cannot be from his religion, for the same cause would operate to the same effect, every where; and you must know that liberty, and the principles of government are now well understood in Catholic countries—This supposed degradation must then have arisen from that system of law which so many of you are now willing to defend—let the Irish Legislator descend from his tribunal, and exclaim to his subjects, I have succeeded in disgracing and debasing you, I will continue the visitation, and punish you for crimes of my own commission.

I did hope that religious persecution, like every other periodical frenzy of the human mind, had spent its force, and was passing away—its progress has been cruel, ferocious and bloody; its duration six centuries!—Philosophers in every country, together with America, Germany and France, have thought such a progress and such a duration were sufficiently degrading to the human character, and have therefore for ever chained to the ground this monster, which perverted a religion of peace, desolated the fairest provinces of the earth, and rendered man a wild beast—yet even in Europe, in enlightened Europe, this system has still its advocates in a country of liberty, among that very generation of men who established the independence of their legislature, and the freedom of their commerce—This inconsistency ought to make you blush, if religious zeal can blush—What! do you still cling to those terrible prejudices, which manacled your commerce, enslaved your people, and degraded your parliament? What! are you willing to shut your eyes against your own experience and to remain untaught by the wretched history of your wretched country?

country? Do you not know, that it was your own internal divisions that first promoted a foreign usurpation; which caused the degradation, the oppression, the misery of this noble island, for which God has done so much and man so little? Reflect on the want of skill in your manufacturer on the small capital of your farmer—mark the appearance of your miserable peasant—see the wretched hovel in which he dwells—survey your country—ponder on the repeated insults offered to Ireland, on her profligate parliaments, on her commerce, once annihilated—on her constitution held in chains—examine well both the past and the present, and then if you are wise, you will find these effects accounted for, by the divisions which distracted you—If you are honest you will seize this opportunity of doing them away for ever—you will then, after the lapse of so many ages become again one nation;—for the Catholic will forget to be a bigot as soon as the Protestant shall cease to be a persecutor.

On the best consideration that I have been able to give this the most important of all subjects, I do not hesitate to declare, that you must prepare your minds for a radical reformation—I do not say exactly the manner or the time when, but sooner or later this system must fall to the ground, oppressed by its own weight—This necessity arose with the establishment of the independence of your legislature—you are willing after you have become a kingdom to cling and adhere to that narrow and wretched form of government which cursed a humiliated and distracted province—The thing is impossible—You are in the middle between the Irish Catholic and English Protestant—you must either adopt the one or unite with the other—you must either renounce your prejudices, or abdicate your legislative supremacy—Did you only

only seize on the scepter of dominion, in order to exhibit yourselves as a spectacle to the world, and prove that such feeble hands could not wield it? Would you rather go from nation to nation, begging a master, than form a compact of strength and perpetual peace with your Irish brother?

I have now stated to you my opinion on this question; a question of such magnitude that he must be a dishonest man indeed who could utter any sentiments that were not really his own; and he must be more than a coward, who, feeling strongly, should not dare to express himself in the same manner—I have done so, I thought it my absolute, and bounden duty—I know your fears, and I laugh at them—I am convinced of your prejudices, and I despise them—I cannot think of putting the fleeting opinions of any body of men, however respectable in competition with the dictates of my conscience, and the sacred interest of this my country.

I appeal from yourselves to your cooler reflections, in moments of less irritation—For my part I can see the prosperity of Ireland but in the union of all its inhabitants, and the union of all its inhabitants but in the adoption of the Catholic body—if it can arise from any other circumstances, convince me of it by arguments strong and irresistible—I will then acknowledge my error, and my renunciation of the principle shall be strong, explicit, decided, and sincere as the avowal.

Hon. George Knox. I offer myself to your notice, Sir, in the humble hope that the consideration which I have given this subject may be of some service to the cause which I support.—I know that in the cause of truth, the weakest abilities will prosper, and I believe that such is
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the cause in which I now engage.—Sure I am, that since the hour I had first the honor of a seat within this House, to the present moment, no question so extensive in its operation, and so important in its consequences—in which interests more various were involved, and in which prospects more distant and obscure were to be penetrated, ever came into discussion here.—To determine it, we must peruse the pages of the future by meditating the records of the past; we must inquire into the nature of man as an individual, and as a member of society—and see where the appetites of the savage stimulate the habits of the citizen.—Before this question every struggle of party, every exertion of a partial and local ambition, every effort at a vain and temporary popularity, is forgot,—Over this question the nation does not sleep, nor the Parliament slumber; not the arts of the rhetorician to adorn it, nor the powerful appeals of the orator to gain it audience;—It comes forward in its simplest garb—and the eyes of the multitude are upon it.—

It is useful in the investigation of a great subject to lay down certain principles, as axioms, by which the person who discusses them is to be governed, and beyond which he ought not to wander. Now I discover such a principle in the muniments of our Constitution, and to that principle I adhere—*connexion with Great-Britain*.—And I add another principle, as a corollary to that—*Protestant Ascendancy*.—For I say that as long as Great-Britain remains attached to a Protestant establishment, and a Protestant Crown, so long must we, being Protestants, remain the *ruling power* here, or the connexion is dissolved. That is, so long must such a paramount authority be vested in us as shall be a security for the permanence

nence of our Protestant monarchy. Shall we call a *Catholic Parliament*—and how long shall we be without a *Catholic King*? Can the Legislative be of one faith and the Executive be of another? and, if they can, is it possible that they should co-operate in the support of the same ecclesiastical establishment? No, Sir—the Catholics are but men—and is it not the nature of man that desire should grow with gratification, and ambition with power? They are men attached to a particular worship,—and is it not the nature of religion to urge its votaries to the elevation of its ministers?—Let the Catholics endeavour to persuade themselves of the contrary;—they cannot persuade us.—What then must be the objects of our deliberations? *Conformity, civil and religious.*

And how is conformity to be obtained? I will not quote to you the words of Montesquieu, nor the language of every writer on toleration; I need not tell you that christianity flourished under contempt and grew up under oppression; I need not tell you that the Protestant faith was generated in the fires of intolerance, and that the ashes of her martyrs fertilized the soil of reformation.—We know, without the aid of history or appealing to any authority, save the feelings of our own breasts, that there is an elastic principle in the mind of man that rises against pressure, and that to oppose prejudice by force, is to strengthen and condense it. How has that principle operated here? A hard and cruel necessity obliged our ancestors to consider their countrymen as their enemies, and to load them with those fetters which suspicion hatred and timidity have ready forged for discomfited ambition, and half-smothered, but not extinguished, revenge.—What was the consequence? The Catholics,

Catholics, finding the arms of the Protestants folded, and that their hearts were closed against them, resorted to foreign powers for protection and to each other for sympathy. They became a strong, because a united party; and they were united because they were oppressed. They found a melancholy pleasure in telling over their wrongs and reviling the authors of them—They felt the necessity, as well as the pleasure, of mutual connexion and support—They became as one family, united in one interest, and kept together as well by sentiments of affection, as by principles of honor and shame.—When time had, in some degree, softened the rancour, and experience had confuted the suspicions of our fathers, we find them opening their eyes on their situation, and perceiving that a country thus disunited could never become rich or powerful. They saw the mischief, but they were either not sufficiently enlightened, or too much governed by their antipathies, to see, or to employ the remedy. They desired a unity of religion, and what were the means which they adopted?—The most base and barbarous, that ever entered into the heart of man to conceive—They bribed the son to betray the father; and in his way to the temple of the true God, they made him trample on the author of his existence.

Policy so cruel and unnatural met with the success which it deserved, and which might have been expected. A few abandoned wretches came forth loaded with infamy and execration, and offered up the sacrifice of impiety at the shrine of our holy religion. But the body remained whole, and the more strong and the more healthful from the separation of its polluted members. At length the time came when the patient loyalty, and the silent sufferings of the Catholics

Catholics were to be acknowledged and rewarded. They received indeed but a tardy acknowledgment and a penurious reward. But much was done when a beginning was made, and in the twilight of toleration which glimmered in 78, you might have seen that sun which rose in 82, and which is now ascending to the meridian—New principles then began to establish themselves, coercion gave way to conciliation, we held out hope where we had formerly held out terror. We allowed the Catholics to realize the rewards of their industry, and thereby we encouraged them to be industrious. But we did more, for we attached them to the laws by which they are now protected, whereas before we estranged them from the laws by which they had before been coerced. From that moment they began to love their country and its constitution. From the moment you planted toleration in the land, the weeds of bigotry and disaffection rotted from its surface. The same moment that you took off the bonds of oppression, you broke the bands of union, and now that you are disinterring the political corpse of the Catholic people, and exposing it to that air which you yourselves have exclusively breathed,—behold it crumbling into dust ! Where is now that union amongst them which you once so justly feared ? See them already discovering the first symptoms of free sentiments by the parties into which they disjoint themselves.—See the * virtuous and the venerable, and the † learned and the liberal, and the host of illustrious names that accompany them separating from the partizans of sedition, and preparing, (to use the words of a great man now no more ‡) “to embosom themselves

* Lord Kenmare. † Mr. Bellew. ‡ Mr. Flood.

selves in the State." The Hon. Baronet therefore presents to us this Bill with the confidence that experience has ratified its principles, and I believe I may add, with the confidence that your suffrage will confirm it. You see what we had to encounter and the arms which we successfully used. Bigotry, we attacked with toleration; alienation, with concession; and the spirit of party with the spirit of ambition.—Look through this Bill, and see whether it does not use the same weapons against the same adversaries! To bigotry it opposes education, to alienation it opposes intermarriage, and to ambition it offers the honorable profession of the bar.—It goes on encouraging industry, by taking off the restriction on commerce. And by diluting the spirit of party, and by infusing the stimulant of ambition, it renders palatable the cup of conformity—I do not mean, Sir, to enter very minutely into the different clauses of the Bill, but I cannot avoid making a few observations on each.

The bar—Sir, I shall not make an unqualified panegyric on that profession, well knowing, that an unqualified panegyric is as absurd and feeble, as an unqualified invective is absurd and malignant. Besides Sir, I do not rejoice in any particular success to stimulate me to extravagant praise, neither do I rankle under the recollection of any peculiar failure to goad me to extravagant abuse.—The bar, Sir, is a profession in which, superior to all others, liberality of sentiment and rectitude of conduct prevail. The mind of a lawyer, minute and laborious in its researches, and cool and unbiassed in its decisions, must necessarily be detached from prejudice. His practice, accustoming him to view the actions of men in various lights, to see where error is mistaken for guilt, when motives of revenge pass

for generous indignation, and the cravings of avarice for the calls of justice: He learns to be cautious in his judgments and liberal in his constructions. It cannot be denied that in a profitable calling there must be many temptations to wrong, and that many fall victims to those temptations,—and it too often happens that an undimmed countenance, and an unfeeling heart raise men to an eminence in that profession, to which no man of virtue and no man of taste can endure to see them elevated. But the bar, keeping as it does a watchful and scrupulous eye over the conduct of its brethren, distinguishes meanness and extortion by contemptuous neglect; and no place better exemplifies than the Four Courts, that solitude and shame are the companions of guilt. But why should I dwell on the characters of the profession, when I may talk to you of their actions? What is their conduct now? Are they engaged in a selfish opposition to a Measure by which so many of them must suffer? No. They support it. Do they wish for a monopoly of the profits of the bar? No, they throw open its doors, despising every gain but what arises from the honorable contention of industry and talents. With such sentiments as these, and with such frequent and luminous applications of them, they need not fear reproach; for the more they are calumniated, the more lasting will be their praise—Neither let them fear that the just objects of their ambition will be withheld from them, since they see, in a recent example, that the same modest talents, the same extensive learning, the same dignity of temper and inflexible integrity, which mark a man out as a fit dispenser of justice to a well regulated state, recommend him to the Government and place him on the * Bench.

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Such a profession therefore, it cannot be much mischief to the cause of conformity to offer to the Catholics—Their prejudices it will remove, by its study and practice, and their antipathies it will remove, by their introduction to a Protestant society.—It places an object of ambition before their eyes in the Bench, attainable only by conformity, and it abates the impediment of shame, by removing them from the body to which they formerly belonged.

As to marriage, the same principles apply, and the same motives urge. Every passion of the human heart is a material for the mould of the legislator as for the observation of the philosopher. If he wishes to smooth the asperities, and soften the acrimony of society, he will seek for that passion which all animated nature acknowledges, but which, united to taste, and blended with sympathy, becomes in the human breast the source of every benevolent and every generous feeling. He will temper its violence by the solemnity of religion. He will restrain its excursions within the limits of law. I speak not of that passion which hurries intemperance into the arms of prostitution—still less of those loathsome vices which sacrifice youth at the altar of decay, and sling contempt upon those grey hairs on which we should only look with veneration: I speak of that sentiment which unites soul to soul, and makes the heart expand beneath modest bonds of sacred wedlock. I speak of that sentiment which our rude ancestors scorned to use, but which we are not ashamed or fearful to apply. By resorting to it we shall not only subdue the violence of individual prejudice, but we shall unite families now separated, and, what is of no little moment, we shall efface the distinction of names.

By the intermarriage of Protestant and Papist, therefore, we unite them more closely to ourselves

selves, and, above all, we break that bond of union which linked them to each other, and give room for the operations of strong passions to excite them to conform.

With regard to education, I am pleased with what is done; but, I confess, I wish the mover of the Bill had gone farther. I should have wished, that some institutions were contrived for the education of priests, and that Catholics as well as Protestants, might terminate their progress through the University, by the honor of a degree. But as it fell from persons of high authority, before this debate came on, that my idea might be accomplished by other means, I shall at present say no more about it. Permit me now to say a word or two in answer to those objections which have been urged against this measure:—

The objections indeed are so inconsistent and contradictory that they generally refute one another—But some observations have dropped in the course of the debate to which it is necessary to allude.—We have heard “that present concessions will be no obstacle to future demands.”—Now if demands be an evil, I ask whether we are most likely to incur that while by compliance or by refusal?—And if they can neither be discouraged by the one or by the other, as I believe.—We must then apply to the usual remedies in cases of compulsion, patience and contempt,—and we must at last resort to that conduct which best becomes a legislature—that is, we must give what it may be right for us to give—and we must withhold what it would be wrong in us to bestow. But says my learned friend, at the other side of the House, “we have been governed in this concession by our fears.”—I admit that the counsels of folly and timidity are the same. I admit, that tho’ an action be ever so just, and wise, in itself,

itself, yet if it appears to be the result of motives rather of weakness than of wisdom—the action will be contaminated by its source, and instead of diffusing benefit—disseminate destruction.—But Sir, did my learned friend examine into our actions before he decided upon our motives? How do they speak? The turbulent and clamorous—that is, those who might have been supposed objects of apprehension, we have treated with proud denial and contempt—To the more reasonable and moderate requisitions of the humble, we have listened.—Those whom we might have refused without a murmur, we have gratified—and those who affected the language of intimidation, we hunted from our doors with scorn and reproof—Could a more exact line be drawn between liberality and meanness?—But there are others who do justice to our motives, but are fearful for appearances—and who say, that we ought to reserve our bounty till it shall seem not to be extorted—I trust in God I may never see arguments such as these prevail in the grand council of the nation!—But if they should have weight,—then I say that this is the time to act—Yes, Sir—If ever there was a time when parliament would demonstrate its magnanimity, it is now.—If ever there was a time when it could shew itself superior to the little passions of little minds, to vulgar pride, and feminine resentment—it is now.—If ever there was a time when it could shew itself superior to those aspersions to which it has lately listened with exemplary patience—it is now—This is the time in which it should be proud to move towards the public good, without the haste and hurry of passion, or the languor of indifference—This is the moment to prove that the attacks of its revilers are untrue, and that

the only trade of parliament, is the commerce of benevolence and justice.

That a part of the Catholics have been indiscreet, I allow.—That a part of them have lately been seduced into measures of madness and conceit, I allow; but, that those measures should excite any serious alarm, or defeat the reasonable desires of the deserving, I cannot admit—I cannot admit that the speculative sedition of the day; and of a few, should outweigh the practical loyalty of millions for a century; or that we should be apprehensive of sentiments, now that the empire is most flourishing, which we desired when it was most feeble—and more particularly when I perceive that one injudicious friend, or one insidious adversary, may, at any time, excite those clamours, which will thus be a perpetual impediment to the liberality of parliament. But, I confess, there is a point of violence, to which it would be apathy and imprudence to submit:—There are measures of open turbulence, plans of secret sedition, which may and which ought to obstruct our bounty,—there are occasions in which we must abandon those whom we would serve—to preserve the constitution and ourselves. And therefore I caution the Roman Catholics, if they wish to preserve and strengthen their friends; and to disarm their enemies, not to be pushed on by the disproportion of their hopes, and the desperation of their leaders; to schemes of ambition which they may long repent—I warn them against rash counsels, and giddy counsellors—I warn them to repose their cause in the permanent property, and permanent character of the nation; in men who have an interest in the general good, and a pleasure in the general favour; and not to trust it to needy adventurers and forward missionaries—men, mean enough to be their flatterers,
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and mercenary enough to be their *stipendiaries*.—I warn them against secret cabals, and factious meetings, and turbulent resolves, and seditious actions.—for I tell them, if they proceed to measures of intimidation, their enemies will triumph, and their cause is lost.—They have to do with a people whose temper is spirit, and whose sentiment is honour. If they attempt to excite fear, they will only kindle indignation.—And again I repeat it to them their cause is lost.

And now Sir let me advert to the language which is used by the foolish friends and crafty enemies of the Catholic cause.—They tell you that you are doing nothing for them by this bill, and that as long as you withhold from them every privilege which every Protestant enjoys, they are oppressed men—they are slaves; or in the language of their affection, they are *Helots*. The Catholics oppressed!—Is it a proof of their oppression, that one of their arguments, for the exclusion of their privileges is their wealth,—and that another is their power?—Is it a proof they are oppressed, that they are protected in their lives, their liberties and their properties with as ample a security as any Protestant in the land? Is it a proof of their abject state, that they enjoy every luxury, and riot in every excess in which the most wealthy and profligate Protestant can wanton? And is that munificent subscription a proof of their distress, with which they vainly hoped to advance their cause by the purchase and importation of an advocate? Is their clamour a proof of their oppression?—Real misery bears its load unheard. It makes no ostentation of grief, no parade of woe. It does not vociferate its clamorous complaint. Where is it to be found?—In the wretched peasantry of this country, Protestant as well as Papist—You will find it in their miserable hovels,
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and among their naked families—you will find it in their precarious tenures,—in the extravagance of absent landlords, and the extortion of their griping agents—*there* is real misery, and *there* is a call to the humanity of this house.—But the Catholics knock at our door, force into our chambers, and with the arrogance of masters, and the haughtiness of tyrants they tell us, “truly they are our slaves.”—Suppose, Sir, I should take one of these slaves at his word, and that I should say to him, “Resign that tawdry habit which so ill becomes you, and yield it up to those whose station it more properly belongs.” What do you think would be his answer? He would say, “Sir I live in a land of freedom, in a country governed by general and equal laws—my property is protected, and it cannot be violated with impunity.” These would be his sentiments, but, I question if they would be couched in words as moderate as mine, much less would they be conveyed with all the humility of servitude. But suppose I should proceed to punish my slave for his contumacy; I fear that a disloyal hand would be raised against its lord——Sir, I have read of slavery—thank God I have never seen it!—I have read of those who, worn with chains, and oppressed with labour, have sunk under their burthens, and were only awakened to new misery by the relentless lash of a ferocious keeper.—Is this the slavery of the Catholics? I have heard of men, snatched from their country, their families and friends, and deprived of every comfort which nature, sympathy and habit had rendered necessary to their happiness; wearing out a painful existence in servitude and exile—Is such the servitude of the Catholics?—I really am at a loss to know what these self-pitying gentlemen mean when they talk to us of their slavery.—Once, it is true, their

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case called strongly for compassion, and I think I was truly sensible to their complaint. But I must frame new feelings for my mind before I can compassionate their sufferings now.—So hard hearted am I become, that I cannot grieve with them that they are deprived of the succession to the throne—So obdurate am I grown, that I cannot lament with them that they are deprived of seats in this or in the other House—and so inflexible are my feelings, that I cannot weep with them for that most lamentable of all their ills, their exclusion from offices of profit and of trust.

I come now, Sir, most unwillingly indeed, to what has fallen from an * Hon. friend of mine, in the course of the debate.—He has hinted at a proposition, the intention of which is no other than this—to imprison the understanding of the present generation, and to throw ineffectual fetters over the understanding of our descendants.—If I were not convinced of the good sense and sanity of my Hon. friend, I should suppose that such a sentiment had been struck from the burning fancy of some bigotted bedlamite. Good God, Sir! Was my Hon. friend serious? Does he not know, that though the principles of a constitution, like the principles of morality, are immutable; the measures of a state, like the actions of an individual, must vary with the varying course of things? Does he not know that the same action which under some circumstances is heroism, under others is murder?—That the same measure which to-day is patriotism, to-morrow may be tyranny—but that the principle remains unchanged? Now, the Protestant Ascendancy is a vital principle of our constitution, interwoven in its whole frame, and essential to its existence.—It is recognized and established by the most solemn legislative acts, and on the most awful
and

and interesting occasions. History, tradition, education, prejudice, habit and instinct, root it in our minds; and there is as little danger that an Irish Protestant should discard it, as that an American savage should discard the principle of self-defence. I cannot therefore see any necessity for adding fresh sanctions to this indelible principle now, but I do see that to attempt to circumscribe its future operation to all eternity—to tell posterity that they must not only derive their constitutional shield from us, but that they must wear it precisely as we do—of the same circumference, in the same position, and with the same constancy, through all the changes of strength and weakness, security and danger, philosophy and bigotry, is to transmit an impotent mandate to men whom we cannot bind, but whom we may teach to undervalue the salutary precautions of our wisdom, by forcing them to despise the silly effusions of our fears. But observe how inconsequently these persons argue, who ground themselves on false principles; for how can gentlemen who profess to act from their constituents, dictate immutable conduct to future representatives of future constituents; or, at this day, proclaim to a future Protestant constituency what to such a constituency must be political and expedient? Did our ancestors, when they imposed necessary shackles upon hands rebelliously raised against their lives and fortunes, in the hour of anger or of danger, speak language such as this? Was this the language of 78, when we broke into the penal code? Was it the language of 82, when the tried loyalty and growing liberality of our Catholic brethren induced us to give them new privileges? At all these periods the political state of the Catholics was accommodated to the times, and it was left for the wisdom of future generations to determine

what degree of political subjection might be necessary to their security. But if this idle manifestation of our sentiments, upon a subject which we have neither the right nor power to decide, were merely nugatory and inoperative, I should think it censurable ; but when I consider that this attack upon the rights of our Protestant successors, is at the same time an insult to the feelings of our Catholic fellow-subjects, I forget the folly of the measure in its mischief. It sounds a false alarm of constitutional danger ; it implies a diffidence in our own wisdom and our own strength, it stigmatizes as suspicious those whom we are about to conciliate, and to whom we are tendering the pledges of mutual confidence ; it says, “ the rewards of loyalty are exhausted,” it stifles hopes, and animates disaffection. I am sorry and ashamed that the suggestion has been thrown out, and I trust it may never again be necessary to combat it. I trust that the prudence and liberality of the Hon. Gentleman who brought it forward may demonstrate to him its danger and inefficacy, and that he may retract it.

Permit me, Sir, before I conclude to say a word or two as to the *quantity* of favour which this bill confers. I am of opinion that we ought to give every thing which it is demonstratively prudent and safe to give. In speculation, I may think that a *limited franchise*, for example, might promote the principle of this bill. But I also think, that time and experience are better guides than any speculation. By these tests I wish the present bill should be tried, before we proceed to further concessions.—When those arbitrators shall have awarded in favour of my opinion, then I have no doubt but the good conduct of the Catholics shall urge their Protestant fellow-subjects, to call upon *their* parliament to push forward in the career of liberality.

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These Sir, are my sentiments;—and on the discretion of the Roman Catholic body shall my adherence to them depend. If ever it should be said to me, “ You have supported the cause of the unworthy—you have embodied sedition, and given it an energy in the constitution.” From the moment that such reproaches can, with truth be uttered, from that moment, my wishes and exertions cease—But I confess Sir, I have far other hopes.—I do believe that the time is coming, and that we shall live to see it, when every distinction of sectary shall merge in the common interest of citizens :—When we shall be one people, united in one *object*, and possessed of same powers for its attainment—*the peace and welfare of the state.*

Mr. George Ponsonby. Sir, labouring under bodily indisposition, in rising to this question I feel my mind still more oppressed than my body, because I know, Sir, that on every question, great or small, no matter what the force of argument or of character may be, on that side which appears to oppose the wish of the Minister, its fate is determined before a word is spoken on the subject; and therefore Mr. Speaker, whatever I can say on any such occasion, will I know be in vain.

But on this subject, the most material to the happiness of Ireland, the conduct of the Minister has been most extraordinary. Did the King's Minister bring forward this business?—No. Did his representative in this country bring it forward?—No.—An hon. Baronet high in the friendship and confidence of Ministers, on the first day of the Session comes down to this House, and proposes the measure, and moves for leave to bring in this Bill;—and another Right Hon. Gentleman (Mr. Hobart) not caring to stake the Government too deeply on the issue, contents himself with seconding

conding the Motion.—The measure was never so much as hinted in the Lord Lieutenant's Speech, nor any communication on the subject made to the Gentlemen of this House—nor any intimation given of a wish to consult the Gentlemen of this House upon the subject—not even with the very Members who were pledged to support the measure.—By this shuffling conduct, and the eagerness to hurry on this measure, the design is pretty evident on the part of Ministers.—They wish to secure to themselves the attachment of the Roman Catholics—and to excite their opposition to that *desperate body of men* (ironically) who sit on this Side of the House.

An Hon. Member has said, he believed this measure came forward by the *advice* of a British Minister,—so do I;—and so believing, am not surprised to see it find its way into this House. But I think it would have been more creditable to the British Minister if the Gentlemen of this House had been consulted before the measure was moved by his representative here.—I am convinced how highly the wisdom of the British Minister is esteemed in this House, and I know that his *advice* is pretty nearly equivalent to a command;—for whatever advice he gives, the Gentlemen on that side of the House generally take it.

On the same night that this measure was first moved, an Hon. Member (Mr. Cusse) on that side of the House, declared that—indeed he loved the Catholics; but he loved the Protestants better, and would never consent to any measure that would tend to weaken their ascendancy.—The Right Hon. Major was immediately on his legs to second this Gentleman's ideas, and declared that he, too, would never consent to any thing injurious to the Protestant interest. Thus the Right Hon. Major

Major declared himself happy in being able to agree with Gentlemen on both sides of the Question. But though Administration here have thus found a way to cloak themselves under a pretence of neutrality, yet I have strong reason to believe that whatever claims the Catholics may advance, they have been encouraged to those claims, and this before the opinion of any one Protestant gentlemen of one thousand pounds a-year property in this country was consulted. But so soon as Administration found those claims supported in some measure by a Right Hon. Friend of mine—and that the business became unpopular with the Protestant interest, they then seemed to put the business from their own doors, and by every artifice sought to turn the tide of vulgar prejudice against HIM, (flapping Mr. Grattan on the knee with his hat) in order to run HIM down.—But HE has raised this country too high, and rendered her too important services to be depreciated but by such mean artifices.

I, Mr. Speaker, shall not make this a question of party: That I leave for those whose policy it is to divide and disunite the people of this country. Let them, if they chuse, make it a question of party; but for my part Sir, I think it a question above party, which every man should consider, not according to his political affections, but, according to his understanding and conscience. I Sir, shall vote for the measure on this principle; that I believe it to be for the real advantage of the country;—but there are some parts of it to which I have strong objections—that part of it for instance which respects education, and which only goes to the permission of establishing Roman Catholic seminaries, but does not go to blend the education of the youth of both persuasions in the same University. This is a principle
which

which I conceive to be dangerous to the avowed object of the Bill, which is an union of the people; because it is in that age, when the hearts of youth are warm, that those liberal friendships are formed, which aduate them through life; but by educating them in separate seminaries you still keep up the principle of division, and still keep the Roman Catholic in those prejudices you complain of. I am, for this reason, of opinion that their education should be in common, and in the University of Dublin;—and therefore I think the Bill does not go far enough in this point, but stops where it should begin. If such a principle as I recommend should be adopted, it may be held necessary to enlarge the building. But in all events, the want of this principle is a radical defect in the Bill, because it is impossible to effect the good purposes devised without providing for the common education of the people.

With respect to the power of the Crown to modify the Charters of the University, or dispense with those Statutes that exclude the Roman Catholics, certainly the Crown has such a privilege, but still it is right, on a question of so much magnitude, which must ultimately induce a public expence in enlarging the present building or founding a new College, that Parliament should speak out its opinion.

With respect to the admission of Catholics to the profession of the law—for my own part so far am I from objection, that I give it my most hearty assent. But when we give this we should consider the extent of the influence we confer. For my part Sir, I am not fond of paying compliments to my profession—But I believe it will be admitted that in that profession are to be found men not only of the greatest talents, but of the most general information on every possible subject

ject ;—to which they are daily led by constant investigations in the various pursuits of professional practice.

In every free country, the law holds the first rank.—In every great revolution for the establishment of liberty, lawyers have taken the lead in the glorious work. This was the case in America and France.—Therefore Sir, in giving the Catholics this profession, you give them an influence short of nothing, but that of sitting in this House ;—And Sir, in giving such an influence, let us accompany and secure it by liberal education.

If this bill is not a measure intended to divide the Catholics and Protestants, and to make it easy for future administrations of the country to divide them at will, there can be no objection to what I have now proposed.—And surely, Sir, it will be wiser, in us to shew the Catholics of this country, that it is to their Protestant fellow-subjects in this House they are to look for protection and indulgence, instead of any minister of this country or any of the persons who usually support him.

As to the conduct of administration in this business, tho' the measure be a good one, they deserve all blame—For no minister should have presumed to meddle in such a business, without having first consulted the Protestant gentlemen of the country—Yet in this business, the minister has made it as much the measure of administration, as if it were a common money bill.

With respect to the other parts of the bill, I shall reserve my opinion until it comes before the Committee. But before I sit down—I shall say thus much in defence of the man in this House whom I most respect :—I am positively convinced, it was never his intention for one single moment,

to support any measure tending in the smallest degree to injure the Protestant ascendancy.

Mr. Secretary Hobart. Being particularly alluded to, I beg leave to trouble the House with a few words.—The Hon. Gentleman has talked of the conduct of Government out of this House, and accused it of setting on the people to run down a Rt. Hon. Gentleman.—Sir, it is not my business to say what motives induced the citizens of Dublin to instruct him;—but as to any interference of Government, I declare the charge is utterly unfounded;—I appeal to the citizens of Dublin themselves—let them declare their motives. The Hon. Gentleman complains that Government did not consult the country Gentlemen of Ireland; I know of no way of taking the sense of the country Gentlemen of Ireland, but in the House of Commons. The first day of the session this Bill was announced, and met with no opposition but from my Right Hon. Friend (Mr. Ogle) whose opinions I do most highly respect. A week afterwards the Bill was introduced, and every point of it explained; another week was given for the second reading; and a third for its committal.

One observation more: This measure is intended to unite all his Majesty's subjects of this kingdom.—Their union and their happiness is my anxious wish, consequently, if any measure is offered that can have a contrary tendency, by binding up the powers of Parliament, I must oppose it.

Mr. George Ponsonby. Sir, I said it was my opinion that Government had interfered to run down the Right Hon. Gentleman; and I founded my opinion on seeing Paving-men, and Pipe-

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water-men, and Police-men, and men that never joined before, all agree upon this occasion.

Sir Thomas Osborne spoke in favour of the bill.

Right Hon. Mr. Cuffe. The Hon. Gentleman has been pleased to observe upon what fell from me when the Bill was first mentioned. I dare say, Sir, my words were not very oratorical, nor my manner very graceful—I am not an orator by trade, nor do I boast of verbosity; I speak right on, as a plain country Gentleman—yet what I said that evening, I will put down in contrast with any thing that Gentleman has said this winter, and I believe the country will think it as worthy of attention. Sir, I am not dictated to by any minister, I speak the sentiments of a Protestant country Gentleman, and when the Hon. Gentleman again thinks proper to allude to my words, I hope he will state them fairly.

Mr. George Ponsonby. I did not undertake to recite the speech of the Right Hon. Gentleman; I only mentioned the substance of it,—“ that he “ loved the Protestant Ascendancy, and would “ not agree to any thing injurious to it,” or some such words;—As to myself, I am not very anxious about my language, nor will I enter into a competition with any gentleman on that subject.

Mr. Egan—I rise, Sir, upon a most important question, such as must appal the most vigorous, the most constant mind; no less than—whether the Legislature shall, by the abolition of pains, penalties, prejudices and degradations, give political existence, utility, and animation, to three millions of palsied disheartened subjects of this unfor-

tunate country ? I will tell the Right Hon. Gentleman (Mr. Cusse) who spoke last but one, and who disclaims all oratory or predilection for orators, what one of the sages of Greece answered to this question ; “ Which was the most perfect popular government ? ” — “ That where the *laws* are more regarded than the *orators*. ” I will beg to tell him also the answer of another sage to the same question ; that of the illustrious Solon, “ Where an injury done to the meanest subject is an insult upon the whole constitution. ” How maturely then, Sir, should we look to those laws, which inflict injury, insult and degradation upon three millions of unoffending subjects. If there is any man in this House from nature senseless enough to think, if there is any man by religious prejudice bigotted enough to believe, if there is one by professional or instructed hypocrisy, base enough to avow, that the Catholics are not intitled to the rights of men, I promise that I will argue with none such. I consign the fool to his dungeon ; I consign the bigot to the incarceration of his own mind ; and the hypocrite not being within the reach of human vengeance, his impiety I must leave to an omnipotent hand. But to the man who challenges with the weapons of reason, and who, to qualify himself for the combat, admits in argument what is indispensable to all demonstration, the first principles, the acknowledged axioms, without the concession of which all argument would be endless folly, and demonstration argument ; to such I address myself, with such I shall be happy to combat ; to such I shall willingly submit if defeated, and if victorious over such men, arrogant triumph would be defeat. But why do I talk of victory on the one hand or defeat on the other. What have I to gain by victory, unless, in those days of depravity, it

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could be supposed that the only wealth I treasured was the future happiness of millions, by the indissoluble union of my country, and its consequent rapid and inevitable aggrandizement, in which I could have no participation, save the consciousness, that I contributed my mite to the abundance of millions. By victory then, I have nothing to gain, but what the vulgar and the vicious disregard and disparage; by defeat *that* of which *they* value the attainment, and magnify the possession. I have among triumphant Protestants to take my share in the greedy zeal of oppression; I have to calculate minute additional power and consequence, by the calamitous disfranchisement and degradation of three millions: I have like the *mental miser*, to bring the money scales of malignity and weigh how much my consequence becomes preponderatory from the misery of others. Constitutional rights are only an acquisition by that barter or exchange, which the individual chuses to make of the valuable Rights of Nature. Rights are only to be invaded or forfeited by wrongs. By what wrong—either those inflicted upon the individual by the offences of others, or those inflicted in fact upon him by himself, because committed against his society? Against the first the laws vindicate by prevention or by compensation. Those offences inflicted by men upon themselves, the laws of society cannot vindicate against the aggression of, but screen the repetition of such enormities, by making the commission of such wrongs a suicide upon the constitution of rights. But such offences being personal no man will dispute, their punishment ought to be temporary, at farthest commensurate with the existence of the offender. Thus far the individual transgressing against his own rights, by violating the laws he had originally fabricated or virtually adopted

adopted ought to be punished: but what law is bold enough, what commandment audacious enough to prescribe that the punishment of the aggressor shall be transmissible to his children's children, in personal afflictions, in social discomfitures, in constitutional depradations? And tho' the human audacity has presumed so far, shall it farther arrogate to itself that vengeance which the Deity has disclaimed? Shall it give to punishments no day of remission, to human affliction no period of limitation? Thus, contrasting the malignity of man against the mercy of God. The business of laws is to govern human affections, not to prevent them; to direct them to happiness, not to obstruct them, not to check their current but to prevent their wandering out of their natural course. There are propensities which the author of nature has implanted in the human breast, that it is impossible for human institutions to eradicate. The art of Legislation consists in improving and directing those propensities, so as to promote the general good, the public felicity; It is as impossible, as it would be absurd to attempt to annihilate them. Yet, such is the arrogance of man, that he has attempted to alter nature, and to make a political individual entirely different from the natural. The laws of Lycurgus punish a remarkable instance of this presumption, but the laws of Lycurgus are gone; *human nature has vindicated herself and is unchangeable.* Our Popery laws furnished a few years ago another melancholy instance of this Legislative arrogance. Their object in many instances was and still is to invert the order of nature; to set a parent and child, husband and wife at variance, to change the course of descent, to force the affections into a new and unnatural channel, to violate all the tenderest relations of life, to poison domestic

ness, and to exclude three millions of the subjects of the state from public felicity. If the end of government be, as it indispensably is, the safety and happiness of the state, the most effectual way of accomplishing that end, is to make it the interest of every individual of the state to lend his assistance in the attainment of that end.

Subordination then might be in every state, as there might be in all great machines; but the great wheels ought to be so continual as to set the smaller in motion, not to impede their operation, and in so doing to waste their strength: Yet so it is in the system of our Popery laws, that the Protestant spends half its strength in reducing and keeping in subjugation the Popish interest, instead of wisely uniting both to the attainment of eternal security, and defence against external injury. Give both a common interest in the conservation of the constitution and the prosperity of the state, and both will co-operate to those ends; but as long as one is intent upon contention and subjugation, and the other looks no farther than defence, the strength of the overseers of both will be lost to the community. Advert for a moment to the period of the Revolution. How was England employed at that crisis? In laying the foundation of her liberties.—How was Ireland employed? In destroying the liberties of two thirds of her own subjects.—What was the consequence? That the same period is the æra of freedom to England, which is the æra of slavery to us. Ireland sacrificed commerce and constitution at the altar of Loyalty, but was content to make atonement upon its own subjects for what is sacrificed to England.—While the Protestants of Ireland were forging chains for the Catholics, their brethren of Eng-

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land were forging chains for them; and chains which would have galled them to this instant, if the common calamities of their country, uniting all its inhabitants in a common cause, and destroying all distinction of Protestant and Papist, had not broken those fetters asunder, and opened to us a freer and more liberal sphere of action. Great revolutions are generally produced by the spirit of the people. They never can be produced by any means unless the people are ready to receive them. Why did Ireland succeed in her demand of a free trade? I will tell you: Because all ranks and conditions of men were united in the demand. The distresses of the people had come home to the senses of every man. The Catholic felt them as well as the Protestant: The pedlar in his shop, as well as the merchant in a counting house; the landed as well as the commercial interest of the country. All had an equal advantage in demanding; all an equal advantage in attaining it. Why were we not equally successful at the same period on the requisition of a free constitution? Because we were not equally interested in demanding it. Because if attained, all would not equally participate in it. Because the Catholics of Ireland are not actually nor virtually represented in the Parliament of Ireland, or because they were therefore at that time indifferent as to which of the two kingdoms constitutional supremacy should reside.— But how should you at last obtain the supreme power of your State? I will remind you: You mocked your people in its requisition! You inveigled and animated the Roman Catholics into associations, and put arms into their hands, in violation of existing laws, to combat for the restoration of Constitution. England saw the union, the confederation of Catholic and Protestant,

testant, for liberty ; and England surrendered to your national union and co-operation in a moment, what she had refused for half a century, to Protestant requisition and national justice.— Reflect upon the gratitude of a Protestant Parliament. You obtained, by the hostile aspect of arrayed Catholics, that Constitution, which was long detained in English captivity. *They* triumphantly brought back the PALLADIUM of their country, and deposited it in its sanctuary ; and then you interdict three millions of its emancipators from visiting its abode, supplicating its protection, or ever expressing their veneration ! What are the pretences, what the pretexts alleged by a Protestant Parliament for this constitutional exclusion ? That the Catholics entertain, though they do not profess, principles hostile to liberty ; and that their election would be a participation in franchise, subvertive of Protestant *ascendancy* in church and state. Let me dispassionately examine the objection, I trust I will demonstrate to you the first objection is an unfounded imputation resulting from those lands of penalties, forfeitures, and, deprecations, which, less just than sanguinary, want the plea of passion, or irritation, to justify the continuance of savage severity. These unmerciful laws forced the Catholics into a complaisance to courts.— Look within your code of laws, and you'll find the cause, you'll find the necessity of that complaisance. You suppose there is something in their religion that occasions it ; but you are mistaken ; you are the authors of it yourselves. That it is nothing inherent in their religion, history, experience, truth, confirm and demonstrate. Religions cannot become servile by change of climate, soils, or times. That spirit of Religion

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which gave existence to the establishment of freedom at one period, cannot subvert it at another. Look to English, look to Irish history, you'll find both authenticate, that the English, and the Irish Catholic venerates the name of freedom. Look to the blood they shed for centuries, to prevent English usurpation. Look to that vindictive policy of disuniting the Catholic, by which alone England established that usurpation. Look to the august example of France—all demonstrate Catholic feelings ardently alive to constitutional independence. The Legislature makes laws; it is the office of the crown to carry them into execution. The Legislature makes laws, rather in vengeance and severity; the Catholic could not have existed, if the Crown did not countenance them, now where that vengeance and severity are much abated, the Catholic could not hope for restoration to human rights. His situation would resemble that of the damned, as represented by Milton, doomed to perdition, and debarred from hope. Severity then, instead of securing Protestant Ascendancy, corroborates prerogative. Banish that vengeance, execrate that severity, you'll detach Catholics from this unnatural complaisance to the Crown, and make them contemplate the Legislature as their patrons. The Catholics find the Legislature cruel, vengeful, unrelenting, unforgiving. They find the Crown commiserating, forgiving, professing and practising benignity and mercy. Is it then to be wondered to which they have attached? Is it to be astonished that legislative persecution has compelled them to take sanctuary in executive commiseration.

Right Hon. W. B. Ponsonby would vote for the bill being committed—but should not think himself

self in any manner precluded by that vote, from opposing in the Committee any part of the Bill he might disapprove of. He voted for the principle of the Bill only on this ground, that he believed it not at all inimical to the Protestant Ascendancy.

Mr. Ogle said, he had wished to have heard the sentiments of Gentlemen before he had spoken himself—had he heard them he should not have said a word. As to the amendment he intended to move to the preamble, he should certainly not move it, if he found that preamble pledged the House to any thing but to support the Protestant Ascendancy; and he hoped that most of those who had spoken in the debate would support him in it.

Mr. Grattan, Sir, in rising to this question, I feel myself very peculiarly circumstanced, because I shall differ from the sentiments of a part of my constituents whom I highly respect; but in the part I shall take I feel that I shall more materially serve the true interests of the capital in general, than I should in complying with the instructions of a few, when the question is—whether three millions of loyal subjects are to be kept in a degrading subjection to a body of one million?—I will capitulate with no set of men on a subject where the interest, the justice and the prosperity of this country are at stake. I have on this question two objects: 1st, the Protestant—2d, the Catholic. What is the condition of the latter? He cannot exercise his industry in any one profession—bar, army or navy; he cannot obtain a degree in physic; he cannot receive any education foreign or domestic; he cannot

intermarry with a Protestant, and if a Protestant should by evasion marry a Catholic, she communicates to her husband the taint of disability; he cannot carry arms for his amusement or his defence; he cannot employ a Protestant servant to carry arms for him; he is bound without his consent, taxed without being represented, and is excluded from the political, civil, military and constitutional functions, to whose establishment he is made to contribute. You despise to tell the Roman Catholic that such a condition is a state of political freedom.—You have ascertained the value of those rights from which he is excluded. You have taught him that no human condition is supportable without political freedom; and that no man circumstanced like him is politically free. You despise to speak in the same country two languages. “These things are necessary for human liberty, but without these the Catholic may be free.” He has in the course of the last 15 years been witness of three controversies on the subject of political freedom;—that of America—that of France—and that of Ireland: the lessons he has learned from them must be implanted in his breast for ever—His destination we must therefore allow is not that of freedom, and his sense of that destination we must suppose to be clear and decided. We have considered his punishment—let us now consider his offences—The Pretender is no more—that former bond of Catholic union, never the object of his hope, and now no longer the source of his despair, extinct, and with him the spring, and passion, and apprehension of these laws. You will please to recollect that these laws, were made principally to guard the succession of the Crown against the followers of the house of Stuart, and that Catholicity was not so much the object of the penalty as the evidence

dence of the attachment. The Pope—a name, driven out of his capital of Popery—France, unable to curse, scarce permitted to bless; without temporal, and now a suppliant even for spiritual authority—the type of the fall of bigotry, and a lesson to all dominant sects of Christianity, and to you among others, not to use their God as a scourge for their fellow creatures.—It is something, on a question touching the repeal of the penal laws, that the principal causes for which they were made—the one has expired and the other is expiring;—the Pope and the Pretender. France, that ancient head of Catholic league, vanished out of that confederacy, and propounding new systems of politics, and new principles of religion, fatal to bigotry either in church or state, and subversive of that slavery temporal and spiritual, at which for the last century we have been accustomed to tremble.—Whatever therefore may be the crime of the Catholic to ground a code of disability, there is one offence, of which he is not, and of which he cannot now be guilty—disaffection—because the objects and the resource of disaffection, and with them the principle itself, must have departed—His offence is therefore reduced to two heads—his nativity, as connected with claims of property—and his religion, as distinct from views of politics.—As to the first, he directly and immediately meets the charge: He denies that any such claims exist; he denies the possibility of their existence; he denies that he could benefit or you lose by the repeal of the act of settlement; he relies upon it that your title is, by time as well as act of Parliament; he insists that a greater number of Roman Catholics take under the act of settlement, than could prefer claim on the repeal of it: that such claims, if any, are common to you, as your title

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under the act of settlement is common to him ; and he offers you any assurance not only for your titles, which he reveres—but for your fears, which he respects ; and he alledges that the whole Catholic body are ready and desirous to take the same oath to secure the act of settlement, which you have thought sufficient to secure the succession of the Crown. He desires you to name your own conditions and terms of abjuration, touching any imputed claim on this subject : thus the code of disabilities, as far as they are maintained on this ground, is reduced to an act of POWER, which disables 3,000,000 of people for the untraceable descent of a few, grounded on the apprehension of claims imputed to that few which they cannot trace, which none make, and which all abjure.

I come now to the other head of offence:—his religion, as distinct from politics. I am well aware in questions of this sort how little religion affects their determination : however, we must not like ardent disputants, in the fury of the controversy forget the subject, nor in the zeal of the sectarist, lose all recollection of the Godhead ;—it is necessary to remind you, that the Catholics acknowledge the same God, and the same Redeemer, and differ from you only in the forms of his worship and ceremonies of his commemoration ; and that however that difference may be erroneous, it is not sufficiently heinous to warrant you in dispensing with the express and prime ordinances of your own religion, which enjoin certain fraternal affection towards all men, and particularly towards fellow-christians whom you must allow to be saved, and are commanded to love : Admitting the principles of your religion in any degree to effect your determinations—you cannot suffer their prime injunction to be cancelled by any ambition of monopoly, or any views to the sole and exclusive

exclusive profits of the State.—It is not sufficient to acknowledge the divinity of your God as an historic fact—you must feel his charities and attest your belief, not only in cheap and easy prayer, but in an animated practical philanthropy. You cannot say, speaking as mere Christians, 'tis true, God ordered these things, but if we complied, the Catholics would get some share of political power. You cannot thank your God for the redemption of mankind, and of these among the rest, and rise from your knees, and inflict on his followers, temporal disabilities on account of their religion: we cannot exercise a political, practical atheism, in the name and on the behalf of our God: if we are justified in imposing disabilities on account of religion, all Christendom should have been disqualified until the 16th century; and even now the greater part of Christendom should remain disqualified—for the greater part is Catholic—then our ideas on politics and religion compounded, would amount to this extraordinary proposition, that Protestants ought to inflict all over the world where they can, disabilities on the majority of the followers of Christ, who would thus stand in a strange predicament, objects to their brethren of perpetual proscription, and objects to our God, by the acknowledgments of those brethren, of perpetual salvation; and this situation would be the more inexplicable, when we maintain that our right to impose these perpetual disabilities arises from the superior benevolence and mildness of the Protestant religion;—we, therefore, arguing this question, merely on the ground of christians are driven to these straits, either to relax the principles of our code, or to surrender the principles of our religion.—Let us shut our eyes, however, to revelation, and look to some other light for our justification; let

let us turn to the law of Nature—but surely we are led or betrayed by that light to revolt, at eternal disabilities imposed upon men for theological errors: the law of nature knows, nor physical, nor metaphysical, nor theological proscription: She imposes no precise standard of theological opinion: in her production many things are analogous; nothing is the same, not even in the vegetable tribe, still less in the workings of the human intellect, and least of all on a subject in whose contemplation that intellect is strained and exhausted, to justify disabilities on account of theological errors; we must therefore have recourse to some other law, than the law of Christianity, or the law of nations; we imagine we have found it in our own peculiar situation; that situation we state to be as follows: the Protestants are the few and have the power; the Catholics have not the power and are the numbers: but this is not peculiar to us, but common to all nations—the Asiatics and the Greeks—the Greeks and the Italians—the English and the Saxons—the Saxon, English and Normans,—the vanquished and the vanquisher—they all at last intermingled; the original tribe was in number superior; and yet that superiority never prevented the incorporation, so that this state of our settlement is not peculiar to Ireland, but the ordinary progress of the population and the circulation of the human species, and as it were the trick of Nature, to preserve by intermixture, from dwindling and degeneracy, the animal proportions. In some tribes it might have been otherwise, but they must have died, before they could reach history, a prey to their disputes, or swept off, by the tide of other nations washing them away in their little divisions, and leaving something better on their shore—solitude or a wiser people.

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Had the English settlers, and the native Irish, been Pagans, they must have united :—Am I to understand that the Christian religion separates and sharpens the natural mildness of barbarous generations, and condemns men, to perpetual degrading casts, so that the errors of the Bramin are the wisdom of Christ. Ridiculous!—What then becomes of this argument, founded on the supposition of a peculiar situation? But here another principle is advanced, connected indeed with the argument of situation, the Protestant Ascendancy—I revere it—I wish for ever to preserve it, but in order to preserve I beg to understand it.

The Protestant Ascendancy I conceive to be two fold, 1st, your superiority in relation to the Catholic; 2nd, your strength, in relation to other objects; to be the superior sect, is a necessary part, but only a part of your situation—To be a Protestant state, powerful and able to guard yourself and your island against those dangers to which all states are obnoxious, is another part of your situation—In the one point of view I consider you as a victorious sect; in the other as the head of a growing nation, and not the first sect in a distracted land, rendered by that division a province and not a nation. It would be my wish to unite the two situations—a strong state, with the Protestant at the head of it; but in order that the head of the state should be secure, its foundation should be broad, Let us see how far the Protestant Ascendancy in its present condition is competent to defend itself: Can it defend itself against a corrupt Minister?—Is the Protestant Ascendancy able to prevent oppressive taxes, controul the misapplication of public money, obtain any of the constitutional bills we have repeatedly proposed, or repeal any of the obnoxious regulations the country has repeatedly

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almented?—There is in this House one man who has more power in Parliament than all the Protestant Ascendancy—I need not tell you, for you know already, as the Protestant parliament is now composed that which you call the Protestant Ascendancy is a name. We are governed by the *Ascendancy of the Treasury*. Let us try the force of the Protestant Ascendancy in the election of the people. A general election in Ireland is no appeal to a Protestant people, for they don't return the Parliament—The Protestant Ascendancy returns for corporate towns about ten or twelve members, the rest are returned nominally by corporate towns, but really by individuals. A general election in Ireland, and particularly since the sale of Peerages, is an increase of the strength of the Minister, and a decrease of the strength of the people; and by the people I mean the Protestant community. The Ascendancy, therefore, in elections, is not the ascendancy of a Protestant people—it is a *Ministerial and an Aristocrate Ascendancy*. Let us discuss your strength in other trials—You are weak against an Administration.—I know what you did in 79 and in 82; but I know in both those periods the Catholic acted in conjunction with you, and each period was immediately anteceded or accompanied by the repeal of part of the penal code: you are weak I say, against an Administration! How are you against an invasion?—Let me suppose that event.—I know some of you would say, we should stand between two fires. I do not believe it, but I do much apprehend, unless you relax your code, that we should stand between the fire of the enemy and the apathy of our own people. If the Catholic resorts to force or to threats he is lost, he has only to resort to your own laws to do you mischief, and in an obstinate and dutiful adherence to act
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of Parliament, to remain a disarmed spectator of of the invasion of his country, unarrayed and unenlisted.

You must, however, in that event, arm them for your defence, as you did in the last, and proposed to do in the former war, and instead of repealing your laws for his sake, you must then break them for your own ; but you will place little reliance on the languid battalion of an interdicted people—and then the unpopular Hanoverian—then the mercenary Hessian—then the unfeeling German must come and guard you with foreign mercenaries against your natural friends as well as your enemies.—A nation thus unable to protect itself without such assistance, becomes the easy prey of any Minister, and the British Government may say to the Protestants of Ireland, gentlemen, you are perfectly excluding from freedom three fourths of your people, but as they happen to be three fourths of your people 'tis impossible that your ill-fated country, even in your own instance, should expect all the blessings of the British Constitution. You, as well as the Catholic, therefore, must make allowance if your Government is somewhat arbitrary and exceedingly corrupt. Why do you murmur?—You have demanded liberty for yourselves, you have refused to it one another: we will, however, soften your situation—The Protestant shall enslave the Catholic, and the Minister shall coerce the Protestant, and thus we accommodate your religious distinctions.

There is another danger to which, or to the fear of which your divisions may expose the Protestant Ascendancy, I mean an Union; let me suppose the Minister, as he has often proposed corrupt terms to the Protestant, should propose crafty ones to the Catholic, and should say, you are three-fourths of the people, excluded from the blessings of an Irish Constitution ; accept the advantages of an

English Union—Here is a proposal probably supported by the people of England, and rendered plausible to at least three-fourths of the people of Ireland. I mention an Union, because I have heard it has been darkly suggested as the resort of Protestant desperation against Catholic pretensions—never think of it—The Protestant would be the first victim—There would be Catholic equality and Parliamentary extinction—It would be fatal to the Catholic also—he would not be raised, but you would be depressed, and his chance of liberty blasted for ever; it would be fatal to England, beginning with a false compromise, which they might call an Union, to end in eternal separation through the progress of two civil wars. I have stated three dangers to which your Ascendancy is exposed; let me suggest a fourth. The intermediate state of political languor whenever the craft of the Minister touches you in your religious decisions. The loss of nerve, the decay of fire, the oblivion of grievances, and the palsy of your virtue, your harp unstrung of its best passions, and responsive only to notes of gratitude for injuries, and grace and thanksgiving for corruption.

From all this what do I conclude?—That the Protestant ascendancy in Ireland requires a new strength, and that you must find that strength in adopting a people, in a progressive adoption of the Catholic body—in such manner, and with such temperament as you who have the Legislature in your hands may well devise, and such as shall gradually unite, and ultimately incorporate; but this will be better understood when I answer an objection made to the Bill before you, on a supposition that giving the Roman Catholic power in your country, you only enable him to subvert her establishment. By power must
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be intended interest, and then the argument will be, that if you give a man an interest in the State, you give him a disposition to destroy it, which is to attribute to the Catholic a passion for political suicide. Sir, the objection assumes two propositions which cannot co-exist, that the Roman Catholic will have power arising from the repeal of disabilities; and the disposition arising from the continuation of them. Sir, the repeal of the disability is the repeal of the passion that grows from it. Gentlemen fall into a sad error when they suppose theological opinions form mankind into distinct political societies, as if there was a political society of Deists or Atheists, or of Free-thinkers; it is not the opinion but the penalty that forms the fraternity; disability is now the constitutive act, forming the Catholic into a distinct association; and the repeal of the disability is the act of its dissolution; I rely upon it that the progressive repeal of the disabling code must accomplish political conformity—the progress of affection is inseparable from the progress of the power; that power grows by slow degrees and stages, in every stage dissociating the Catholic from his own sect, and associating him to your's; conforming him to your nature, and assimilating him to your strength, while he adds life and vigour to his own: to give capacity is one thing, to give enjoyment is another, and in every advance from the capacity to the enjoyment, a personal interference takes place, and animosity dies, and a conformity of mind grows on a conformity of interest—the soul of the one sect enlarges by the act of giving, that of the other by receiving, until each is depurated from the spleen of the controversialist, and both are enlarged into one people.

I speak of the nature of man—I speak of the affections inseparable from that nature. I speak
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of the great emotions of the heart and decisions of the head, and not of the momentary irritabilities of some nerves in the brain, whilst controversially stings for the hour, and for the hour only, unless a proscriptive law shall make the idle sensation eternal.

I apply to the present state of religion in Europe, and I deny that men act as religious combinations, except when they are interdicted. How do we ourselves? How do Protestants act? do we vote for instance, as a religious combination under the direction of the Parson; or as a political combination for political interest; or a private combination for our own? How do Presbyterians act? do they vote as religious combinations at the Presbyter's beck; or for the Presbyterian candidate against their own landlord, and their own interest?

In other countries—America—do Catholics and Protestants, or Protestant and Catholic there act as religious combinations, under the distinct banner of priest or parson, or as a solid combined mass of people? Is not her infancy competent to instruct our age on this subject, and give us simple but august and exalted instruction of morality, policy and wisdom? France—does she act as a religious combination? or are her Catholics and Protestants arrayed as distant clans of religionists? How do modern Protestants in England act? How do they act on the subject of religion?—A bill in 1775 passed the Parliament of Great Britain establishing Popery in Canada—How did a Protestant majority, how did Protestant Bishops vote—as a religious or political combination? They voted for the bill, for the Ministry—for the Popish religion. How have you acted lately?—A Viceroy Catholically affected and Catholically connected, is placed in the Government

ment—How do Placemen, how do Bishops act? They see his family, a very ancient and most respectable one, proceed to the Mass;—are Protestants revolted—do they withdraw their support—do the Bishops resist him—do the courtiers desert him—do they act as a religious or a political combination? They vote for the Viceroy, for the Minister, for the place and for the pension—Let us come to the particulars of some part of this code—see whether the obstacle to conformity is not in the law, that law for instance, that will not allow a Roman Catholic to hold a commission in the army—What does it but forbid an opportunity of associating with the Protestant, and a mild but compulsory means of conformity? 'Tis the mess more than the chaplain: what can we say against admitting the Catholic officer, when we admit the Catholic multitude? Shall we say that Catholic numbers, who from their pay can have no temptations, and from their education no information, and who are precisely that description of Catholics at whose arms you revolt, may with safety, and have been with great use admitted among your troops; and a Catholic gentleman, cannot be trusted with a commission? Am I to understand that if Catholic officers were intermixed with Protestants they would model the regiment; and then with the assistance of Catholic lawyers shutting up the courts of justice by which the latter live, levy war against the British empire? In the same way the law preventing Catholics from coming to the bar, is another provision against conformity—a provision against association with Protestants: the Temple the fraternity of Club and Bar are more likely to produce conformity than the closet—You have tried the force of study to convert mankind—try the pleasure of the table, try personal intercourse, mere human means much more gross, but

but perhaps more efficacious—In the same way are our laws respecting the education so many provisions against conformity; they exclude the Catholic in his docile years from our society and our information, and enact that they from their earliest infancy shall live and learn only from one another; we send them and punish them for being sent to foreign and Catholic countries to imbibe the principles of religion and politics; and then we make the prejudice of their education a reason for the continuation of their proscription, proceeding in a succession from cause to consequence, and from consequence to cause.

One defect in this bill is, that it does not open the University.—By virtue of this exclusion you prevent any man from the practice of physic, unless he gets his degree in some other university: Here again your laws deprive the state of another opportunity of conformity by personal intercourse, and endeavour to deprive yourselves of health by the advantage of his science and medicine: Just so are the laws respecting marriage so many provisions against conformity, and a code for the preservation of their claims; no association by mixture of kindred; no oblivion of title by intermixture of family: such part of our laws are formed to perpetuate casts, and to ordain Catholic blindness, and preserve exclusive Catholic clan and association. I disapprove much of that part of the bill which leaves intermarriage subject to disfranchisement: you at once legalise, and you punish the connection: you encourage and you deter, and you make yourselves the object of your severity, and diminish the base of your own strength, and turn your prejudices against your own power and privilege.

I conclude this part of the subject by observing that the privileges we speak of do not give to the Catholic

Catholic the power to subvert the establishment, neither do they leave the disposition—They resort to personal intercourse as a means of political conformity—they employ political intercourse as a further means of that conformity, and they give a common interest by law to men who have a common interest by nature.

Another objection has been advanced against the repeal, an objection founded on their imputed character—but character is no delinquency—much less the character which the interdicting sect gives the interdicted. You do not disqualify the Tories because they are arbitrary—nor Methodists, because they are mad—nor Courtiers because they are servile. If imputed character was delinquency—the sword of the conqueror, the acrimony of the sectarian, and the tales of the nurse, would be the measures of your justice, and the laws of your country. The charge against the character of the Catholics resolves itself into two heads, a supposed predilection to arbitrary government, and a supposed idolatrous veneration towards their spiritual pastors. As to the first, Magna Charta is the answer—As to the latter, their present proceedings in Ireland, and the proceedings of other Catholics abroad are an answer. It is true the clergy have generally greater influence where the flock is interdicted, and the spiritual guide is by that interdiction, made the political head, and leader of party: but I forget; on this part of the subject we are silenced—Can we, who have enacted darkness by act of Parliament, reproach the Catholics with a want of light? We have forbidden their education, we are responsible for their ignorance: however ignorant some may suppose them, we must allow there are among them, some who can write, and we may suppose therefore there are some who can read. Let us

take care how we press this part of the subject, lest the character which we give of the Catholic, the English should extend to the Irish in general, and give to both that degrading description which we give of one another: This objection is however strengthened, we are told, by the present publications and passions of the Catholics of Ireland: let me trace the history of those passions and publications—the first cause and origin was THE AMERICAN WAR.

America complained that she was bound and taxed without her consent—The Catholic complains that he is taxed without his consent—America said, a people taxed without their consent were slaves—The Catholics say, a people taxed without their consent are slaves—The friends of American liberty said, taxation and representation are inseparable—God hath joined them—no British Parliament can separate them—they applauded the passion as well as the principle—3,000,000 of men dead to all sense of liberty, would be fit instruments for enslaving England, were the words of Lord Chatham—America has resisted—I rejoice says he, that America has resisted—but on this dispute the fiercest champion was Ireland—In 85, do you remember your discourses on the court addresses? the best argument in favour of the Catholic claims is, the defence by Ireland, and particularly by the Presbyterians of Ireland in favour of America—How did you at that time crush to shivers the little pretences of monopoly, and the frivolous pretences about the act of navigation, and so vile a peddling argument as the policy of empire, advanced against the eternal truth and original justice that clothed the half naked American, when he stood invincible on his great maxim—No representation no freedom? The next occasion was your own Revolution; in your own case you had
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an opportunity of displaying yourself on this principle, and of exposing that ridiculous imposition, that would affect to set up civil liberty as compensation for the loss of political—You shewed the habeas corpus, trial by jury, rights of property, and rights of person, were nothing, if they depended on laws, in the making or repealing of which you might have no kind of concern. You instanced several examples in the commercial restrictions on Irish trade—and therefore you pronounced no civil, unless there is political freedom; the Catholic listened, and believed he caught the fire from your own lips, and now approaches you with your triumphant disquisition—It is an embarrassment, but an embarrassment which you must have foreseen with certainty, and you will govern no doubt with prudence—whatever you do, it is my humble wish that it may turn to the good of all, and your own in particular.

I conclude this part of the subject by saying, as broadly and unconditionally as words can import, that the progressive adoption of the Roman Catholics does not surrender, but ascertains the Protestant Ascendancy, or that it does not give the Catholic the power to shake the establishment of your constitution in Church or State, or property, neither does it leave him the disposition—it gives him immunities, and it makes Catholic privileges Protestant power:—I repeat the idea, and never did any more decide my head or my heart: my sense of public justice and of public utility—I repeat the idea, that the interdict makes you two sects, and its progressive repeal makes you one people—placing you at the head of that people for ever, instead of being a sect for ever, without a people, equal perhaps to coerce the Catholic,

but obnoxious, both you and the Catholic, to be coerced by any other power—the Minister if he wishes to enslave, or the enemy if he wishes to invade you; an ill-assured settlement, unprepared to withstand those great diseases which are inseparable from the condition of nations, and may finally consume you, and in the mean time, subject to those intermitting fevers and pains, which shake by fits your public weal, and enfeeble all her determinations.

I have on this occasion submitted my genuine sentiments, if they differ from yours I lament it, and appeal to the wisdom of the next generation from the errors of their fathers—If they differ from those of some of my own constituents I lament it also—for I love them and revere them—but this is a question vital to you and to the Catholics in the present and everlasting condition of both. I cannot, therefore, capitulate with any errors, founded however they may be on the best motives.—You think what I say is novelty—another age will think it plain and humble truth.—I sit down re-asserting my sentiments, which are, that further removal of disabilities is necessary—to make the Catholic a freeman and the Protestant a people.

Mr. M. Beresford spoke in favour of the principle of the bill in its present limited state—but was no friend to an extension of that principle.

Hon. F. H. Hutchinson voted for committal.

Mr. Curran said, he would have yielded to the lateness of the hour, his own indisposition, and the fatigue of the House, and have let the motion pass without a word from him on the subject, if he had not heard some principles advanced which
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could not pass without animadversion. He knew, he said, that a trivial subject of the day would naturally engage them more deeply, than any more distant object of however greater importance, but he begged they would recollect, that the petty interest of party must expire with themselves, and that their heirs must be, not statesmen, nor placemen, nor pensioners, but the future people of the country at large. He knew, he said, of no so awful call upon the justice and wisdom of an assembly, as the reflection that they were deliberating on the interests of posterity. On this subject, he could not but lament, that the conduct of the administration was so unhappily calculated to disturb and divide the public mind, to prevent the nation from receiving so great a question with the coolness it required.

At Cork, the present Viceroy was pleased to reject a most moderate and modest petition from the Catholics of that city. Their next step was to create a division among the Catholics themselves; the next was to hold them up as a body formidable to the English government, and to their Protestant fellow subjects; for how else could any man account for the scandalous publication which was hawked about this city, in which his Majesty was made to give his royal thanks to an individual of this kingdom, for his protection of the state? But he conjured the House to be upon their guard against those despicable attempts to traduce their people, to alarm their fears, or to inflame their resentments: Gentlemen have talked as if the question was, whether we may, with safety to ourselves, relax or repeal the laws which have so long concerned our Catholic fellow subjects? The real question is, whether you can, with safety to the Irish constitution, refuse such a measure? It is not a question
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merely of their sufferings or their relief, it is a question of your own preservation. There are some maxims, he said, which an honest Irishman will never abandon, and by which every public measure may be fairly tried. These are, the preservation of the constitution upon the principles established at the Revolution, in church and state; and next, the independency of Ireland, connected with Britain as a confederated people, and united dissolubly under a common and inseparable Crown. If you wish to know how these great objects may be affected by a repeal of those laws, see how they were affected by their enactment. Here you have the infallible test of fact and experience; and wretched indeed must you be, if false shame, false pride, false fear, false spirit, can prevent you from reading that lesson of wisdom which is written in the blood and the calamities of your country. Here Mr. Curran went into a detail of the Popery laws as they affected the Catholics of Ireland. He described them as destructive of arts, of industry, of private morals and public order, as extirpating even the christian religion among them, and reducing them to the condition of savages and rebels, disgraceful to humanity, and formidable to the state. Having traced the progress and effects of those laws from the Revolution to 1779: Let me now ask you, said he, how have those laws affected the Protestant subject and the Protestant constitution? In that interval were they free? Did they possess that liberty which they denied to their brethren? No, Sir, where there are inhabitants, but no people, there can be no freedom unless there be a spirit, and what may be called a pull in the people; a free government, cannot be kept steady or fixed in its seat. You had indeed a government,
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but it was planted in civil dissention, and watered in civil blood, and whilst the virtuous luxuriance of its branches aspired to Heaven, its infernal roots shot downward to their congenial regions, and were intertwined in Hell. Your ancestors thought themselves the oppressors of their fellow-subjects, but they were only their jailors, and the justice of Providence would have been frustrated, if their own slavery had not been the punishment of their vice and their folly. But, said he, are these facts for which we must appeal to history? you all remember the year One thousand seven hundred and seventy-nine. What were you then? Your constitution, without resistance, in the hands of the British Parliament; your trade in many parts extinguished, in every part coerced. So low were you reduced to beggary and servitude, as to declare, that unless the mercy of England was extended to your trade, you could not subsist. Here you have an infallible test of the ruinous influence of those laws in the experience of a century; of a constitution surrendered, and commerce utterly extinct. But can you learn nothing on this subject from the events that followed? In 78 you somewhat relaxed the severity of those laws, and improved, in some degree, the condition of the Catholics. What was the consequence, even of a partial union with your countrymen? The united efforts of the two bodies restored that constitution which had been lost by their separation. In 1782 you became free. Your Catholic brethren shared the danger of the conflict, but you had not justice or gratitude to let them share the fruits of the victory. You suffered them to relapse into their former insignificance, and depression. And let me ask you, has it not fared with you according to your deserts? Let me ask you, if the
Parliament

Parliament of Ireland, can boast of being now less at the feet of the British minister, than at that period it was of the British Parliament? Here Mr. Curran observed on the conduct of the administration for some years past, in the accumulation of public burdens and Parliamentary influence; but, said he, it is not the mere encrease of debt; it is not the creation of one hundred and ten placemen and pensioners, that forms the real cause of the public malady. The real cause is the exclusion of your people from all influence upon the representative. The question therefore is, whether you will seek your own safety in the restoration of your fellow subjects—or whether you will chuse rather to perish than to be just? Mr. Curran then proceeded to examine the objections to a general incorporation of the Catholics. On general principles, no man could justify the deprivation of civil rights on any ground but that of forfeiture for some offence. The papist of the last century might forfeit his property for ever, for that was his own, but he could not forfeit the rights and capacities of his unborn posterity. And let me observe, that even those laws against the offender himself, were enacted while injuries were recent, and while men were not unnaturally alarmed by the consideration of a French Monarchy, a Pretender, and a Pope; things that we now read of, but can see no more.—But are they disaffected to liberty? On what ground can such an imputation be supported?—Do you see any instance of any man's religious theory governing his civil or political conduct?—Is Popery an enemy to freedom? Look to France, and be answered. Is Protestantism necessarily its friend? You are Protestants, look to yourselves, and be refuted. But look further: Do you find even the religious sentiments of sectaries marked by

by the supposed characteristics of their sects ? Do you find that a Protestant Briton can be a bigot with only two sacraments, and a Catholic Frenchman a Deist, admitting seven ?—But you affect to think your property in danger by admitting them into the State. That has been already refuted, But you have yourselves refused your own objection. Thirteen years ago you expressed the same fear, yet you made the experiment; you opened the door to landed property, and the fact has shewn the fear to be without foundation.

But another curious topic has been stated again; the Protestant Ascendancy is in danger. What do you mean by that word ? Do you mean the right, and property, and dignities of the Church ? If you do, you must feel they are safe. They are secured by the law, by the coronation oath, by a Protestant Parliament, a Protestant King, a Protestant confederated nation.—Do you mean the free and protected exercise of the Protestant religion ? You know it has the same security to support it. Or do you mean the just and honorable support of the numerous and meritorious Clergy of your own country, who really discharge the labours and duties of the Ministry ? As to that, let me say, that if we felt on that subject as we ought, we should not have so many men of talents and virtues struggling under the difficulties of their scanty pittance, and feeling the melancholy conviction that no virtues or talents can give them any hope of advancement.—If you really mean the preservation of every right and every honor that can dignify a christian priest, and give authority to his function, I will protect them as zealously as you. I will ever respect and revere the man who employs himself in diffusing light, hope, and consolation.

solation. But if you mean by Ascendancy the power of persecution, I detest and and abhor it. If you mean the Ascendancy of an English school over an Irish university, I cannot look upon it without aversion. An Ascendancy of that form raises to my mind a little greasy emblem of stall-fed theology, imported from some foreign land, with the graces of a lady's maid, the dignity of a side table, the temperance of a larder, its sobriety the dregs of a patron's bottle, and its wisdom the dregs of a patron's understanding, brought hither to devour, to degrade, and to defame.—Is it to such a thing you would have it thought that you affixed the idea of the Protestant Ascendancy? But it is said, admit them by degrees, and do not run the risk of too precipitate an incorporation. I conceive both the argument and the fact unfounded. In a mixed government, like our's, an increase of the democratic power can scarcely ever be dangerous.—None of the three powers of our Constitution acts singly in the line of its natural direction; each is necessarily tempered and diverted by the action of the other two: and hence it is, that though the power of the Crown has, perhaps, far transcended the degree to which theory might confine it, the liberty of the British Constitution may not be in much danger. An increase of power to any of the three, acts finally upon the state, with a very diminished influence, and therefore, great indeed must be that increase in any one of them which can endanger the practical balance of the Constitution. Still, however, I contend not against the caution of a gradual admission. But let me ask you can you admit them any otherwise than gradually? The striking and melancholy symptom of the public disease is, that if it recovers at all it can be only through a feeble

feeble and lingering convalescence. Yet even this gradual admission your Catholic brethren do not ask, save under every pledge and every restriction which your justice and wisdom can recommend to your adoption.

Mr. Curran concluded with calling on the House to consider the necessity of acting with a social and conciliatory mind. That contrary conduct may perhaps protract the unhappy depression of our country, but a partial liberty cannot long subsist. A divided people cannot long subsist. With infinite regret must any man look forward to the alienation of three millions of our people, and to a degree of subserviency and corruption in a fourth; I am sorry said he, to think it is so very easy to conceive, that in case of such an event the inevitable consequence would be, an union with Great Britain. And if any one desires to know what that would be, I will tell him.—It would be the emigration of every man of consequence from Ireland; it would be the participation of British taxes without British trade; it would be the extinction of the Irish name as a people. We should become a wretched colony, perhaps leased out to a company of Jews, as was formerly in contemplation, and governed by a few tax-gatherers and excisemen, unless possibly you may add fifteen or twenty couple of Irish Members, who might be found every session sleeping in their collars under the manger of the British Minister.

Mr. Barrington, alluding to what had been advanced by Mr. Curran, said, there seems but little difference of opinion as to the principles of this bill; that is, as to the principle of *partial* toleration; and were I inclined to enter into a general discussion of the question, the lateness of the hour

forbids me to trespass on the indulgence of the House. I shall therefore briefly, but firmly state the extent and outline of my sentiments on that great subject; and I am only induced to do so from the extraordinary turn which this debate has taken, and the ingenious and artful insinuations of an Hon. Member—Insinuations studied for the obvious purpose of sowing the seeds of dissemination between the Government of this country and the Roman Catholic body, and imputing to false motives and false principles, the conduct of every Gentleman who is attached, as well to the prosperity as to the Government of this country—one yet too wise or too consistent to be connected with the Hon. Member or his colleagues. His speech this night seemed most strongly tinged by those tragi-comic scenes, perfectly adapted to the days of antient Shakspeare. The Hon. Member's flights of fancy soaring above reason, and his lamentations sinking below it, bear a strong semblance to two statues which adorn the gates of bedlam—the one as raging, the other as melancholy mad.

But frantic as the Hon. Member may be, I cannot tacitly suffer him to tell the people of this country, that if there be merit in a partial relaxation of the penal laws, and receiving the Roman Catholic body in some measure into the bosom of their country, he and his friends only act from pure or virtuous principles. I believe, and I say, that on a question of so gigantic an importance to this country, no Minister of the Crown would or could dictate to the conduct of any Member of this House. There is no man whose bosom warms more to the principle of toleration than mine; there is no man would sooner strike off those fetters which confine a great body of our countrymen and brethren to disqualifications and restraints,

restraints, which the policy of the times and their own turbulence made necessary. But that must be done with caution; our constitution must never fall a victim to our liberality—It is true that in this enlightened age, the spirit of toleration is seen arising from the grave of bigotry, it is true she points to universal benevolence, and to universal concord, and as she goes her course, illumines and humanizes the creation; but that spirit must be restrained within the circle our Constitution draws round her, the tolerating power must not destroy the principles assigned to its protection, and should that spirit of toleration, now hovering around this country, grow bold from encouragement, and dare assail the bulwark of our Constitution, let her be chained again, and let her be sent back to the grave from whence she arose, and let her remain there, fettered and shackled by the hands of her own intemperance, 'till the great day of general emancipation shall give eternal liberty to all things—These are my general principles; I pledge myself no further. When the different parts of this bill come separately before a Committee, they will be separately investigated—their consequence will be fully considered, and the determination will I trust be wisely made; 'till then I shall say no more, but to remark that one part of this bill I warmly approve of—home education: the better ranks of our Roman Catholic brethren are good and loyal subjects, the lower ranks are more doubtful, and perhaps both ranks owe many of the prejudices with which their political principles have been tainted, to the want of that domestic education which our own prejudices denied them.

Our Irish youth, sent to foreign seminaries, often imbibed the dangerous principles, as well as the ordinary education of the countries they passed through;

through; immured within the limits of a monastery, taught to consider heretics as enemies; or arrayed in the military legions of a despot, whose word was law, whose mandate was coercion—they returned to their native soil as it were incultured in inveterate principles of monastic bigotry, or monarchical despotism; they felt themselves too stiff to concede to any Government which had not a priest or a tyrant at its head. The foreign education of the present times would be worse; a nation whose hands are embrued in sacrilege and massacre, are ill adapted to form the pliant principles of Irish youth; they would learn to despise the form of our Government and the peace of our country, and would return home enamoured of anarchy, innovation and treason. Home education would obviate these evils; educated under our happy Constitution, they would not learn to despise that Constitution, they would learn to revere its principles; a social intercourse with their countrymen would give them a taste for domestic happiness, instead of foreign tumult, and the prejudices of the Catholic would be lost in the virtues of the citizen.—I shall once more repeat, that the principle of this Bill, in my mind, should be adopted as far as our present Constitution and Ascendancy will admit, and no further;—so far I am its friend—farther I am its enemy.

Mr. Marcus Beresford voted for the committal of the Bill, as did *The Hon. F. Hutchinson*.

Chancellor of the Exchequer. I have too much love and respect for the Protestants of Ireland—I have too much love and respect for the Roman Catholics to allude to subjects of animosity which have long slept; or by inflammatory harangues to

to kindle new commotion. Sir, I rise to rescue the Protestants of Ireland from the calumnies that have been thrown upon them; I rise to rescue the memory of our forefathers from the unjust and unfounded aspersions that have been thrown upon them; they have been described as cruel tyrants, for enacting laws to which they were compelled by self-defence and the necessity of the times; and which laws we, their posterity, relaxed in the most essential points the moment a favourable opportunity arrived. Was this tyranny in the Protestant Gentlemen of Ireland? No, Sir, the Protestant Gentlemen of Ireland are as liberal as they are brave.

Sir, I cannot forget that I am a Protestant myself; that I am born of Protestant parents, and that I am a member of the Protestant establishment; and therefore I will not hear Protestants degraded under colour of an invective against laws that we have repealed. I love as much as any man, and no man will more heartily consent to every reasonable act of toleration; but I do not chuse to hear the Protestants of Ireland accused, for what purpose I know not.

Let me caution gentlemen against listening to this general kind of reasoning, which, in every country where it has been adopted, has excited contention and produced ruin:—let me caution them against that kind of reasoning which hands you over to an UNION or a CIVIL WAR; either of which must end in blood, and bring destruction on this country.

There has been a kind of reasoning used this night, as if it was necessary the Constitution of the country should be overturned, because the opposition have not been able to overturn the government. I very much doubt that the people of Ireland will subscribe to this doctrine, for
however

however highly the opposition may value themselves, the people value the constitution more.

To my constituents, who sent me here, I owe my first duty—if they should say to me—"Give away our ascendancy—give away our elective franchise!"—I should very reluctantly do it; but if they do not direct me to bestow their rights upon others, I call upon any man to say whether I am not a betrayer of my constituents rights, if I give them away unbidden.

Gentlemen have spoken much of prejudice and bigotry, as if Protestants were prejudiced bigots: Is there no prejudice on the other side? Is nothing to be given up but by Protestants? Let the Roman Catholics do away *their* prejudices, and it will be injustice indeed if we do not repeal *our* laws.

One observation more and I have done: The avowed object of this bill is to unite his Majesty's subjects, and to promote concord amongst them, preserving at the same time the Protestant Ascendancy; every man therefore, who suggests any measure of conciliation to be adopted in it, does a public good; but the man who knowingly incites the Roman Catholics to demand what he is convinced cannot be conceded, is an incendiary and *an enemy to his country*.

The House then resolved itself into a Committee on the Bill,

Lord Delevin in the Chair.

Mr. G. Fysonby said that he had some observations to make on that part of the Bill respecting education, and as it was now a very late hour, he wished that the Chairman should report progress.

Mr.

Mr. Ogle also expressed a wish, that the further consideration of the Bill should be postponed to Monday.

Mr. Secretary Hobart said, there was no intention to precipitate the business, and in compliance with the wishes of gentlemen, he had no objection to the Chairman reporting progress.

On the House being resumed,

Lord Delvin reported progress, and got leave to sit again on Monday.

At half past twelve o'clock, the House adjourned to Monday.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 20.

Sir Boyle Roche moved, that all the Petitions relative to the Roman Catholic business now lying on the table, be referred to the Committee on the Roman Catholic Bill.

Sir Hercules Langrishe opposed the motion, as irregular and unparliamentary. The petition in question had been ordered to lie on the table, and the Committee had no capacity whatever, either to entertain the petition or comply with its prayer. The Bill before the House went to four points which were specified; but as to the elective franchise, the committee was incompetent to deliberate. The Hon. mover of the motion, therefore, was irregular, his motion was unparliamentary, and as such could not be complied with. He

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might

might move an instruction to the Committee from the House, but the petition was totally irrelevant.

Sir Boyle admitting that he was irregular, withdrew his motion.

The Right Hon. David Latouche moved, that the Petition of the Roman Catholic Committee, presented to the House on Saturday night, should be read by the Clerk.

It was signed by Edward Byrne and others, on the part of themselves and the Roman Catholics of Ireland.—*Vide, Saturday's business*].

Mr. Latouche then said, that if complied with he was of opinion, that it would affect our establishments in Church and State. He therefore moved that the petition be rejected.

The Right Hon. Mr. Ogle seconded the motion.

Sir John Blaquiere was sorry to disagree with his Hon Friend's proposition. The Petition had been received by an almost unanimous vote of the House; it was entered upon their journals, and therefore it required the deliberate answer of Parliament. The Catholics have a right to be told, and to be told with temper and due respect, that they are not to expect that privilege of which they have been deprived by law, and therefore which they have no *right* to claim. He thought the question of the utmost importance, and upon which the future peace of this country would materially depend;—and he therefore thought the Petition would not be precipitately rejected, without

without mature deliberation, and clear reasons candidly assigned.

The Right Hon. Mr. Beresford wished for a fuller House, in order that the determination might be more general. He had seen in newspapers, which went farther than the journals of the House, several proposals signed by that same Edward Byrne, which specified that they should concede even more than was requested in the Petition; in those papers it was proposed that they should not only grant the elective franchise; but enable the Roman Catholics to become Magistrates and Grand Jurors. As the circumstances of the country would not admit of this, he was for at once letting the sense of the House become known; but he thought the present mode preferable, and was against going into a committee; the former was the least offensive mode of disposing of the business.

General Cunningham, wishing most sincerely the Petition might be fully examined, hoped the Right Hon. Mover would postpone his motion until there should be a fuller House, in order that every man might have an opportunity of rising in his place, and declaring his sentiments, in order that the question might now be fully and finally decided—and that the Roman Catholics might no longer deceive themselves with hopes of receiving that which it was impossible for the House with safety to grant; for the question was, whether they were to continue a Protestant Parliament, or to become a Roman Catholic Parliament? On the decision of that question, he trusted that there could not be a doubt in the House.

He had never heard the Protestant Ascendancy properly described but once in that Assembly, and

by a gentleman (Mr. R. Sheridan) on the the preceding Saturday night, who represented it to consist in a Protestant King, a Protestant House of Lords, and a Protestant House of Commons. This was a just definition; for so long as the latter two branches of the Constitution were affected to the Protestant interest, they had little occasion to fear; and so long as the King continued a Protestant, there was no danger to fear the creation of Roman Catholic Peers. For his part, he was as clearly convinced, as ever he was of any proposition in Euclid, that the consequence of extending any part of the elective franchise to the Roman Catholics, would be in a short time the establishment of a Roman Catholic Parliament. In the newspapers he had read, that the intention was to allow Roman Catholics to vote for members to sit in that House, if possessed of 20l. per annum freehold property, in the same manner of Protestant 40s. freeholders. Were that the case, he would venture to affirm, that we should have more Roman Catholic than Protestant voters in Ireland. He possessed he said, some property in the country, and he had the advantage of a seat in Parliament for the space of forty years uninterruptedly, during which time he had uniformly voted in favor of the Roman Catholics. But on the present occasion he thought it his duty to speak out and declare with firmness he never could go so far as to grant them the elective franchise. He had himself a considerable estate in Ireland, and he had spent as much upon that estate as any Gentleman in that Assembly; but he was certain if the prayer of the Petition was granted, there would be twenty Roman Catholic freeholders for one Protestant on the lands of *Mount-Kennedy* (the General's very elegant and

and highly improved estate in the county of Wicklow).—It was now the duty of the House to speak out with determination, and if it was necessary, in the name of God, to draw swords at once and stake one interest and power against the other. He thought the proposition an absolute absurdity.—He thought the present night a most critical one for Ireland—He saw the galleries of the House were full, and he was glad of it—that his sentiments might be the more openly avowed;—and he thought every man in the House, whether Papist or Protestant, was bound in honour to rise in his place and state his sentiments.

Mr. French said, no man in this House regarded more firmly than he did the rights of the Constitution ; but he would not treat with indignity a Petition signed by so many reputable names, he thought it should be coolly investigated and fairly answered.

The Hon. Denis Browne observed, that the only question before the House was, whether the petition before them should be rejected or not ?—He firmly declared for his part, that he was against the rejection ; for he could see no grounds for supporting such a measure. A petition was never rejected, unless it contained on the face of it something disrespectful to the House, which the present did not. He had on the preceding night represented the consequences of rejecting petitions of the people in Great Britain, as the practice had severed America from the empire. On the present occasion, he confessed he was surprised that the Right Hon. Gentleman should bring forward so strong a motion as a rejection of the prayer of a
decent

decent petition, presented with all propriety, from a respectable number of subjects, without so much as a single argument or observation upon the measure.

He agreed with the Hon. Gentleman, (General Cunningham) that the Protestant ascendancy was to be preserved by a Protestant King, a Protestant House of Lords, and a Protestant House of Commons. But he had never heard that the Roman Catholics had solicited any thing contrary to this establishment. They had not requested to become Members of Parliament. It was true there were other things included in the petition, exclusive of enabling them to participate in some degree in the elective franchise. They had in contemplation to be rendered eligible for serving as Magistrates and as Grand Jurors. As to these matters, every gentleman could judge for himself from a knowledge of his own country. He would answer for his own county, that some of the most respectable gentlemen in it were Roman Catholics: the gentlemen who possessed the fee of the lands were principally absentees who resided in another kingdom. Of course this extension of favour must be an advantage to the country.

He denied that the privation of elective franchise arose from any civil or political demerit in the Roman Catholics; and recited an anecdote to shew how they had been originally deprived of the right of suffrage. There had been a contested election for the county of Galway, and Lord Dunkennell, son of the Earl of Clanricarde, was candidate in opposition to a Mr. Ormsby, a Protestant. And the Roman Catholics did return Mr. Ormsby to Parliament in defiance of his Lordship. Upon this he posted up to town, and in resentment, through his interest with the Lord Lieutenant,

Lieutenant, he procured that act, the 5th of George the First to be enacted, by which they lost their right of elective franchise.

He concluded with mentioning, that he thought the treating the petitions of loyal and peaceable subjects with indignity, as the present motion went to do, was the worst of all possible modes to be pursued.

Sir James Cotter declared himself not for treating the petition of the Roman Catholics with indignity. But when they expressed a desire to participate in the elective franchise, he thought it the duty of the House to tell them they should not. The petition he conceived to be highly indecorous, because it was previously known that Parliament could not accede to its prayer. This petition purported to be on the part of the Roman Catholics of Ireland. He would ask, how they could vouch that it was on the part of the Roman Catholics? And then they must be obliged to acknowledge that they had set up committees of correspondence, and had sent delegates to hold meetings in the capital, with a view of dictating to Parliament what the Roman Catholics would condescend to accept from them.

Another part of the petition to which he conceived a strong objection was, that expression which appealed to the *justice* of Parliament. By appealing to their justice, it was tacitly implied that some of their *rights* were withheld. To this he would never assent; for these rights, by the constitution, were forfeited, and were taken away by Parliament he supposed; and after mature deliberation. It behoved the Roman Catholics to shew the same causes did not now exist, before he should consent to alter that policy. The sooner the House evinced their intention of rejecting the
claim

claim of the Roman Catholics to the elective franchise the better, as it would the sooner undeceive them.

Mr. Marcus Beresford said, he had heard something asserted, as if the House was not disposed to receive the petition of the Roman Catholics. The fact was, that the petition had been received, was read and ordered to lie on the table. This was all that Parliament was bound to do with any petition. And more could not be expected from them to one which, on the very face of it appeared to be subversive of the Protestant ascendancy in Ireland. He deprecated this idea with much warmth and indignation. There was another petition from the inhabitants of Belfast, of the same tendency. He was ready to meet gentlemen in fair debate upon the merits of both. But he begged that his Right Hon. Friend (Mr. Latouche) would so couple them in his motion, that they should experience the same fate.

Sir Boyle Roche, *with all that Demosthenean force and Ciceronian elegance which always distinguish his transcendent eloquence, and excite the admiration, and not unfrequently the pleasantries of the House—in speaking to this subject, shed such a fascination on the intellect of our Reporter, that, unable to catch the vivid lightnings of his imagination, or follow the brilliant and dazzling rapidity of his flights—he proceeds to state what is reported to have been said on a similar occasion, by a county Kerry Gentleman, nearly related to the Baronet—in that tramontane dialect of the Killarneian Alps, so eminent for the “Suaviter in modo, & fortiter in re!”*

Mr. Spiakar, Serr, theay kyon nat bee frinds to Romin Kyothilics that wid urge any points dizaugreeble

um?—No not vwon Serr. And who does these felliz rapprizint?—They rapprizint thimselfes, Serr, but they misrapprizint the Roman Kyothiliks.—They or nat the anshint Noability, nor Jantry nar Clargy, but the rwabble av the town Serr, who come forward in a barefeaced impidint mannir, to dictate to Pyaarlimint. I say Serr, they shid be rejicteed with indignaashin. Is theare one respectible nyeame to that insyimiz degrading petishin? No not vwone Serr.—Has any one witnessed the conduct of these fellyz?—for fwhile they wor pritinding to forum humble petishins on behauf of their Romin Kyothilic brethrin, they were houlding corrispondinze with the Neashinil Assimby av Fraunce, and they and the people of Bilfast were faurming every shkeme betueene um to disturb the peace and haurminy av this country;—and they were entertaining a fellow who was in this town, a French democrau, Serr, who was tranzferred from his own country, to pizen the minds av the people here—fwhile this same Jahn Kyow, Serr, dishtribidid several thousinds av pyamflits—Payne's pyamflits—thorough the country. But Serr, the Romin Kyothilick' Nobility and Jantry obharred such abominaashins—they have no consarn in this Petishin Serr, and tharefoare let the bleame av it rest, fware nou id aught to rest, upon the scum of the earth. Theay or the inimies and not the frinds av the Roaman Kyothilicks Serr—a parshell av shap-keepers—and shap-lifthers,—and villyins—and varmint!—I kyon nat bear it wid pashins.

I am afraid I grow too waurum Serr!—but I kyont help id.—This was my motive for moving to refer those petishins to the cwommittee, and that those neames might be read that I might expose um to this assimby—fwhy Serr, I recognize upon that petishin some nyeames that in

1784—was upon the tauring and fithering cwommittee—I am thure Serr, the country Jantlemen knew nothing of what these felliz were transacting for thim—for I am firmly pershuaded Serr, they would nat vush to accept any favour this House did not think fit to gront.

The Right Hon. Mr. Brownlow professed to rise with concern on the present occasion. He thought the resolution not only proper, but necessary at the present time. On Saturday night, when the petition was presented, he expected that some Gentleman would rise and make a similar motion. He would have done so, but that he did not wish to obtrude himself on the House. While he said this, he declared that he was disposed to serve the Roman Catholics, but not to such an extent; for the conduct of that body in the reign of the Stewarts, particularly in the time of James the Second was such, that they could never be trusted with power in Ireland.

He denied that the House treated the Petition with disrespect, even if they should proceed to reject it: They had given it all the attention which petitions in the usual course are accustomed to receive. And whenever an extension of the elective franchise was proposed to the Roman Catholics, he trusted that in that House they would neither deliberate nor hesitate; but at once give the question a positive rejection.

Sir Henry Cavendish, conceived the question before the House to be this—Will you reject a Petition praying for an extension of the elective franchise to Roman Catholics, or not? It was a self-evident proposition, which, in a Protestant Parliament, precluded debate. Its rejection,

tion, therefore, should meet with his hearty concurrence.

Sir Thomas Osborne said, he was clearly of opinion that the matter of the Petition was just. He was inclined to think, that the time had arrived in which it was proper to impart the elective franchise to our Roman Catholic brethren. In saying this he could not be supposed to speak from prejudice, for he was descended from an ancient Protestant family, who had been employed in times more critical than the present in the defence of their country, and *that* at a period when many of the ancestors of those who affected such fears for the Protestant Ascendancy would not be found to have been their cotemporaries in Parliament.

The Right Hon. Mr. Cusse thought the motion before the House was in itself a very simple proposition. It was, whether they would or would not grant the elective franchise to the Roman Catholics? This question involved another, of no little importance, which was, whether, they would have a Protestant or Roman Catholic Parliament? He should not skulk from the question. He would put it fairly and fully—and he would tell the Roman Catholics that he would not grant them the elective franchise, either now or at any other time. He would give them what the Bill pending proposed—but no more. While he declared this resolution, he avowed that he had on all occasions voted for the relief of the Roman Catholics in the course of his parliamentary conduct.

The Attorney General declared that the wish of his heart, was to extend to the Roman Catholics every

every advantage which they could enjoy, consistent with the safety of the establishments in church and state. But he would never give a vote inconsistent with their safety. He could not conceive that the petitioners were treated with disrespect if the petition was rejected, after it had undergone the usual form. He admitted that it was not necessary to enquire whether the prayer of it was made by merchants, shop-keepers, or others. It was enough that it came from our fellow-subjects and countrymen; for by that it was entitled to every attention. It ought to be carefully considered, for its consequences might affect our constitution, our religion, nay our lives. And should the petition be rejected, he trusted that the light in which the Roman Catholics would view it would be, that the requisition was refused because they held it not at that time to be proper to give it, and not with a design of meeting their prayers contemptuously.

The Hon. Mr. Annesly thought every man was now called on to declare candidly his sentiments on a subject of so much importance, and he for his own part, should not skulk from the part he felt himself bound to take—He did not like to reject the petition because it was brought into the House accompanied by humility and respect—He did not like to reject it abruptly on account of the names signed to it, many of which he knew to be highly respectable—but he never could agree to grant what the petition required, because he was certain if he did it, would ultimately and inevitably tend to the establishment of a Papist House of Commons.

Mr. Stuart, of Killymoon, said, that when the prayer of a petition was such as the House could

could not possibly grant, it was their duty at once to reject it. He trusted that they would do so in the present instance. If they went into a committee upon the question of granting the elective franchise, it would imply that there was a probability of carrying it into effect. There was none. For he was clear in his own mind that *compliment* would lead to the introduction of Roman Catholics into that House, for the natural wish of a Roman Catholic constituent must be to have a Roman Catholic representative.

Mr. Westby would go so far as the bill for the relief of the Roman Catholics. If further claims were made he would not only resist them, but be one of the first to move for revoking the concessions formerly made to them.

Mr. Blake, of Adfry, thought the Roman Catholics entitled at least to respect and liberality from Parliament.

Mr. Barrington was surprised how any man in that House could come forward with a petition, bearing on the face of it a requisition which it was impossible for the House to comply with. He loved the Roman Catholics—but he loved the constitution better, and therefore he would not grant a power incompatible with the safety of that constitution—and he thought better for the House to tell them in a manly stile they could *never* expect to receive such a concession—He would treat them as brothers, but then as younger brothers, and would not sell his birth-right to them for a mess of Pottage. Had the Roman Catholics come to this House earlier in the session and thrown themselves on the generosity of their Protestant brethren, he doubted not but indulgence

gence would have extended to them beyond the latitude of the bill before the House—but now it became necessary for the House to be guarded in its liberality.

Mr. Ogle I believe it is unnecessary for me to say, I will not vote for Roman Catholic franchise. I think the petition ought to be rejected, for if it is not, it may imply that we admit the principle of the petition.

I never in my life was so much delighted as I am at this moment; I glory in the principles which gentlemen have spoken. I think this will be a glorious night for the Protestants of Ireland; there are two modes by which you may on this occasion immortalize your names, either by addressing his Majesty, and declaring your firm determination to maintain the Protestant ascendancy, or by a preamble to the bill, which, notwithstanding the unreasonable attacks that are made upon you, you have the kindness and the benignity to grant.

The Hon. Mr. Loftus supported Mr. Ogle. He declared his own sentiments perfectly coincided with his Right Hon. Colleague, and he knew he was expressing the wishes of his constituents.

The Hon. Mr. Maxwell had some doubts as to assenting to the bill for relief of the Roman Catholics, but they were now done away. He had seen sufficient proof of the spirit and magnanimity of the House. The concessions about to be made could not now be imputed to motives of pusillanimity—they could now be supposed to proceed from nothing but the benignity of Parliament

ment and the irresistible impulse of humanity and commiseration.

Mr. Browne, of the College, said, his sentiments upon the whole of this business might appear rather singular—His opinion, was, that it would be wise in government when they saw certain declaratory publications from bodies of Roman Catholics that must vex any moderate man, not to bring forward any bill at all now, but to postpone it for another session. But, now that the bill was brought forward, to some parts of it he should take an opportunity of stating some objections. He professed himself rather what might be called a bigotted Protestant so far as regarded the principles of the constitution. He had never seen a Roman Catholic until he was 16 years old, and he then considered him a prodigy; but he had since by intercourse with many respectable men of that persuasion got rid of his prejudices, whatever were his opinions with regard to the bill, he was not prepared to go so far as the petition required—But though the House might not *now* see it expedient to grant the franchise to Roman Catholics—he thought no man could be prepared to say we would never grant that privilege, or bind down future Parliaments, whose wisdom would no doubt be directed by the expediency of times and circumstances. He hoped there was no compromise formed for passing the bill on the ground of such a preclusion.

Here *Mr. Ogle* rose to say, if the Hon. member alluded to the preamble he had mentioned—the idea of compromise was inapplicable, as no man, not even his most respected friends in that House
were

were acquainted with the purport of his preamble.

Mr. Browne explained his idea—that it seemed to be a general agreement amongst members not to oppose the bill, but to reject the petition.

Sir Edward Newenham said, the motion for rejecting the the petition, was, in his mind, rather unusual ; the petition of the subject ought ever to be treated with respect, and therefore referred to a committee ; which committee, having debated thereon, would report their opinion. That he was decidedly against granting the elective franchise to the Roman Catholics ; confident that such a privilege would entirely destroy the present establishment in church and state ; yet he would vote against the rejection of that petition, unless the merits of it were first canvassed in a committee.

Mr. Forbes—I rise to express my concern and astonishment at the favourable reception, which the House has this night given to an attempt to excite ridicule and contempt against the subscribers to the petition now under your consideration ; whom both from the respectability of their characters, and their consequence in the commercial world, it is equally our duty and our interest to protect and cultivate. Notwithstanding this unfavourable disposition of the House to hear any argument against the motion for the rejection of this petition, I shall not hesitate to affirm that the mode of treating it which we are urged to adopt, appears to me not to be warranted by the usual proceedings of this House. I do admit that if the petition had been presented when there was not a full attendance, or if the substance and object of it had not been fairly and correctly

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stated

stated by the member who introduced it; or if the House had in any degree been taken by surprize on the subject, it would not have been contrary to the practice of Parliament to have proposed the motion made by the Right Hon. Member; but the present case is directly the reverse of that which I have stated, this petition was presented in a very full House; and such precaution was used before it was received, that not relying on the usual correctness of the statements of the Hon. Member who presented it, the House required that he should read every word of the petition; and after being possessed of the object and prayer of it, unanimously resolved that it should be received and lie on the table. The friends of this motion profess that they do not intend any disrespect to the petitioners, but only adopt this measure, as a mode of declaring to them a fixed determination of not granting to persons of their description any participation in the elective franchise. I cannot conceive that such a material departure from parliamentary usage respecting a petition which does not militate against the privileges of the House, and is perfectly consistent with the privilege which all descriptions of our fellow-subjects enjoy, of petitioning Parliament for the repeal of any law of any nature or tendency whatsoever, can admit of any interpretation, but that of disrespectful treatment; and if we suffer the petition to remain on the table, without being referred to a Committee, and pass the bill now depending without the insertion of any elective qualification, no person can deny that such a procedure must operate as a sufficient indication of our determination not to grant the prayer of that petition. I object to this measure, as it subjects the House to the suspicion of going out of their way to injure the feelings of their

Roman

Roman Catholic brethren ; and it militates against the great object of the Bill now before the House, the conciliation of the affections of the Roman Catholics, and the promotion of a firm and permanent union of all descriptions of people in this country, in support of the common interest of Ireland. If we advert to the conduct of the British Parliament, we shall find more respect shewn to American resistance than Catholic loyalty. Before the declaration of independence, the petitions of the Americans were never rejected by the Houses of Parliament ; and even after that event, the petitions from Congress to the King were received by him, and afterwards laid before both Houses and taken into consideration ; and yet the object of those petitions was to subvert the supremacy of the British Parliament.

Though I am adverse to the present motion, I do think that the Bill of the Hon. Bart. is sufficiently ample in respect to the advantages it purports to confer on the Roman Catholics ; because I have always considered it most expedient that the extension of privilege to our Catholic fellow subjects should be gradual and progressive ; thus every relaxation of the Penal Laws must operate as a temperate reform, without exciting the apprehensions of their Protestant brethren ; but as the Members of the House are called on this night to speak out, I shall without any reserve declare, that according to the best judgment I could form on the subject, a farther extension of privilege or an admission of the Roman Catholics to a reasonable and moderate participation in the elective franchise, could be effected without endangering the Protestant Ascendancy, which I shall ever most zealously maintain ; I conceive no farther declaration on this subject necessary, to evince the attachment to the Constitution, of a man, who

has sacrificed more than any Member in this House in support of that Constitution, and the consistency of his public conduct. Yet as the decided opinion of the House, and the present temper of the Protestants of Ireland are adverse to the adoption of such a measure at this period, I am certain that the Roman Catholics will submit with that respectful deference, which they have so repeatedly testified for the determinations of the Legislature of this kingdom, and the wishes of their Protestant brethren; reposing a well founded confidence, I trust, in that growth of public sentiment in their favour which, I am happy to observe, by a fortunate concurrence of circumstances is daily accelerating; but in order to inspire precaution in some Gentlemen, who appear to act at present under the influence of their apprehensions for the safety of the Protestant Ascendancy, I beg leave to remind them that they were actuated by the same apprehensions in 1778, when they opposed a Bill at that time introduced into this House for the relaxation of the Penal Laws against Catholics; yet experience has since proved that those apprehensions were groundless; and Gentlemen who in 78 resisted the measure of enabling Roman Catholics to acquire estates in fee simple, in 1782 co-operated with the original friends to that measure, of whom I was one, in restoring to the Catholics the right of acquiring such a dominion in property; and we now are all convinced that the laws passed at these periods, instead of proving injurious to Ireland, most eminently contributed to the prosperity of this island, by adding strength to its yeomanry, and by restoring to this country some of its most ancient and respectable families, the property and talents of whom must otherwise have been de-

voted

voted to the service of a foreign and perhaps hostile power.

If Gentlemen advert to the conduct of the Protestants of England last year, respecting the repeal of the Test-act, they must feel a stronger conviction of the necessity of guarding their minds against the influence of the apprehensions I mention ; though the experience of twelve years has proved that the repeal of this act has not been attended with any bad consequences in this kingdom, yet the English Protestants have resisted the adoption of a similar measure, with all the vehemence and ardour, which we might expect they would have displayed against a direct attempt to subvert their Constitution in Church and State ; and one of the most enlightened of the Clergy of their Established Church, in reply to the argument proving the innoxiousness of the measure from the experience of Ireland, has asserted that every person informed in the political history of this kingdom knows, that Government in 1780 consented to the repeal of the Test-act under the terror of a Spanish invasion ; an assertion which every man, who recollects the number of our Volunteer army, and the union of the people at that period, knows to be erroneous.

I must advert to a misconception, which appears to have prevailed very generally in this House, that an admission of Roman Catholics to a participation in the elective franchise must affect very materially the settlement of our Constitution at the revolution of 1688.

If Gentlemen will consult our history, they will find that there was not any settlement of the Constitution of Ireland at that period ; the security of our religion and property were the benefits which the Protestants of this kingdom derived from the Revolution ; essential and important advantages, which justly entitle the event to commemoration,

commemoration; but the endeavours of a certain description of men in this House to obtain a participation in the benefits of the settlement of the Constitution of England at the Revolution, and in those measures for the security of the rights and liberties of the subject, which grew out of that settlement, have been constantly and successfully resisted by the present British Minister; the act, by which the Roman Catholics were deprived of the elective franchise, was passed at a period long subsequent to the Revolution; it did not originate in any delinquency of the people of that persuasion, the law was enacted after an experience for twenty-five years of the peaceable conduct of the Roman Catholics; a conduct, which they have since uniformly pursued; untainted by the example of two rebellions in the sister-kingdom; and when the short term of eighteen years was deemed sufficient to expiate the guilt of Scotch disloyalty; the Irish Catholic may with propriety and justice plead his allegiance and his penalties for a century, as an atonement for the crimes of his ancestors. In order to preserve unanimity, I wish that we should refrain from any explicit declarations respecting our conduct in future on the subject of Catholic claims; yet we ought not to extinguish hope in the minds of our fellow-subjects; on the contrary let us hold out to our Roman Catholic brethren a participation in our Constitution, as a prize to be obtained by a firm perseverance in their allegiance to the Government of the country, and by unequivocal proofs of their affection for and attachment to the principles of the Constitution. The period for adjudging this prize cannot now be ascertained; it must depend on the experience of the effects of the law proposed to be passed this Session, and on the circumstances of the country.

Lord Headford said, he trusted there was no man in that House a more decided, or stronger friend to the Protestant interest and Ascendancy in Ireland than he was, or would on every occasion go farther, or sacrifice more to maintain and uphold it ;—consequently he would certainly vote for the rejection of the petition then before the House. He begged leave however, to differ with the Hon. Gentleman who spoke last, that the rejection of this petition would in any wise affect or tend to prejudice the Bill at present depending for the relief of the Roman Catholics, he considered them as utterly unconnected ; the petition, he looked upon as the production of those men whose inflammatory and seditious publications had with justice drawn down upon them the obloquy and censure of every sensible man and loyal subject in the kingdom, let him be of what persuasion he might—The Bill he considered to be founded on an enlightened policy, calculated to confer favors and impart as far as prudence will allow, the blessings of our invaluable constitution, to a numerous, a respectable, and a loyal body of our fellow subjects ; as such it had his warmest and best wishes ;—and he hoped that when that Bill did go into Committee nothing would be tacked to it which might in any way lessen the favor meant to be conferred. He intreated the House to consider what it was that enhanced the value of a favor ? Why most certainly the manner of granting it. When the Parliament of Ireland is disposed to make concessions they should do it with magnanimity and good grace ; when they refuse, let it be with firmness and dignity.

The Right Hon. B. Conyngham defended the proposed mode of rejecting the petition, as perfectly

fectly parliamentary—with regard to the extension of the franchise required, he acknowledged some prejudices for the policy established by our ancestors.

The Parliaments of 12 successive reigns, from Henry VIII and Elizabeth, to Charles I. and II. had passed acts restrictive on the Roman Catholics, and if such sentiments had been growing ever since the reformation, he thought it dangerous now to trust persons towards whom the wisdom of ancestry had used such caution.—The principle of Great Britain in this and a variety of other privileges, with regard to offices and qualifications, was a principle of preclusion even towards her Protestant subjects.—The greater part of the electors of England enjoyed their franchise to the preclusion of the rest of the nation, in certain qualifications of property or corporate right.—Now if such precautions were necessary to the principle of property, were not some necessary towards the principle of mind?—He thought it would be extremely unwise to grant the franchise to men whom he was taught to believe held principles injurious to the constitution—and until they should come forward and disavow those principles, it would be utterly unwise to allow them to participate therein.—But, said he, whenever they shall come forward with such a disavowal I shall be foremost amongst those who divest themselves of prejudice, and among the foremost to grant them every privilege of the constitution.

Mr. Bushe, said he was anxious that the motives on which the petition should be rejected might not be misunderstood—It seemed the almost general sense of gentlemen—that they meant no more by rejecting the petition than to refuse the prayer of it—a participation of the elective franchise—His

own opinion had been best expressed by the Attorney General, who had said that he would not now agree to the prayer of that petition.—I not only, said he, reprobate the doctrine of attempting to bind future Parliaments, but even of binding ourselves—Parliament must be ever open to deliberation—The right of legislation, and the duty to make at all times the best laws which the times shall admit of, are inseparable, and commensurate—The Constitution which could not give us perfect wisdom, gave us the best thing, of which the fallible nature of man is capable—It gave us a Legislature bound to govern by the circumstances of the times—It gave us actors suited to the shifting scene, and a constant duty to give to the people the best suggestions of our diligence and our intellect—The Roman Catholic has a right to the attention of Parliament and to every variation in the laws which can be suggested by its wisdom, judging of men and of circumstances as they appear in all its changes—By performing this great and original duty of legislation, and by that alone, we can preserve the Protestant Ascendancy, for it is by that we can justify it.—The right and the duty of legislation cannot be suspended—The principle is as broad as Legislation itself, but to a REPRESENTATIVE Assembly it is peculiarly applicable—Can it be denied that we owe some respect to the opinion of constituents either to our own respectively, or to the collective voice of the constituents of the kingdom? There is a daily change in the constituents themselves, and those who are not changed, have a right to change their opinions—The Roman Catholic has a right to recommend himself to his Protestant fellow-subject by all that is good, and all that is improved in his conduct—The Protestant has a right to observe and to reward that conduct

by his recommendation of the Roman Catholic to the more favourable opinion of Parliament, and to deny this capacity of the one to deserve, and of the other to reward, is to deny one of the most valuable rights of both, and to destroy one of the best bonds of human society—What right has one man to prejudge what another may observe to-morrow? We are bound to hear him, and if there be any thing in his mind which unfits him for a participation of our privileges, we are to hope for his improvement, and to adapt our laws to its progress—The laws have given us power, but nature has not given us fore-knowledge—To say otherwise is to ascribe to ourselves the prescience of a God, and the organs of the deaf adder—The conduct of a part of the Catholics at the present period has indeed been indiscreet in the extreme.—But I believe they themselves perceive the effects of their indiscretion—Nothing that any of them have done, nothing that any of them could do, shall make me subscribe to a doctrine which I reprobate, or prevent me from opposing it at greater length, if it should be either proposed or implied in any preamble which may be offered to us—What has been observed by an Hon. Member [Mr. Forbes] that to let a petition lye unheeded on your table is a common mode of disregarding the prayer of that petition, is certainly conformable to our frequent practice—But I think it better to reject a petition at once, than to refer it to a committee with a fixed resolution to reject it there—The opinion of the House seems to fluctuate between these two methods of treating the petition. I think that to refer it to a committee with such a determination, would be but a solemn mockery. In offering to reject the petition, I mean no more than to say, I do not now agree to the prayer of it.

The Right J. O'Neill confessed his regret that the petition had ever come before the House;—but since it had been received, he should be sorry to see it marked on their journals by any thing like censure, which would be the case if abruptly rejected.

Sir John Blaquiére was glad the petition had been thus brought into discussion, as he was still of opinion the treatment it should this night receive would most materially interest the future peace of this country.—He was of opinion the petition ought not to go into committee, but then he also thought the *reason why* should be candidly assigned—and this reason was because the prayer of the petition asked what a Protestant Parliament could never grant, consistently with the safety of a Protestant state;—saying therefore it could not be granted NOW, would be to cherish hopes which he trusted never would be realized.—The Catholics, aided by able men, had drawn up this petition in terms with which they conceived it impossible for the house to refuse compliance; they “relied on its justice, and they promised that, grateful for past favours, they would still be so in proportion to such further indulgence as Parliament might deem wise”—but still he thought the discretion of the House should be governed by a consideration of the disparity of numbers in the two religions—and he quoted the parish in which he himself resided, in which there were 15,000 Roman Catholics and himself the only Protestant.

In Paris and its vicinity, he observed, that the Protestant ministers, when that country had a Government and Constitution, were permitted to discharge the functions of their office with perfect freedom—because *there* their number was small

small in proportion to those of the established religion—but in the southern parts of the kingdom—Languedoc, &c. where the Hugonots were more numerous than the Catholics, if a Protestant minister, was found reading abroad, he was hanged the next morning.

Mr. Egan, I had the honour, Mr. Chairman, to present that petition to this House: It was received by the concurrence of a majority—but if it is now to be rejected without any sort of investigation, I shall have to lament as a misfortune the circumstance of its coming before the House under my introduction.—But, Sir, I shall oppose the motion of the Right Hon. Gentlemen, whom I most highly respect, because I think it militates against the order and decorum of Parliament. If I thought it contained a single requisition having the slightest tendency to the subversion of the Protestant religion in Church or State, there is not a man in this House who would more firmly oppose it than I would—but seeing no such tendency—fearing no such danger, I shall vote for its committal.

I am not fond, Sir, of speaking of myself—but on this occasion I will say, that from my earliest rudiments of education, I was taught to entertain a bigotted reverence for the Protestant religion, to the prejudice of Popery;—but, Sir, if by the experience of years that bigotry is removed, and my mind liberalized by a more intimate knowledge of society—I hope it will not under these considerations, be suspected that I would offer to this House a measure disrespectful to its dignity or subversive to its principles.

When I brought in the petition, I used a language, I trust not unbecoming a Member of this House:—When I was called on to present it,
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I did not pledge myself to support its requisition;—and when called on to state its objects, I did not hazard from mere memory, any obscure statement that might be suspected to conceal any lurking demands,—but read it fully and fairly to the House, together with the names that were signed—names, Sir, of citizens amongst the most respectable in your metropolis—of traders amongst the most wealthy and important in your country; and let me say, Sir, as a lesson to *indiscretion*—that the fordid invectives attempted to be thrown against them this night will, instead of an odium, prove a panegyric on their characters; and let me conjure a Protestant House of Commons not to adopt a measure which shall sanction such invective.

Sir, in presenting this petition I conceived myself as doing no more than my bounden duty as a Member of this House, in complying with the requisition of three millions of my countrymen and fellow subjects in the realm,—It was not only received with scarcely a negative, and ordered to lie on your table; but has been most ably supported by men with whom, if I could stoop to adulation, I would say it was my pride to be included even in error,—men whose support of the measure ought in my mind to sanctify its adoption.

The Right Hon. Member who has brought forward this motion, Sir, is a man for whose character and principles I hold the highest veneration; and I scruple not to say that in most matters, if to concur with him, rendered it necessary to forfeit the conviction of my own understanding, I would do it; but give me leave to say, Sir, that I trust the day is not far distant, when he and his friends will see their motives are founded on misapprehension.

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I wish to be informed Sir, if, when a Petition has been received by unanimous assent, and is so recorded upon your Journals, whether it is consistent with parliamentary order to reject it without investigation, or any cause alledged?—for my own part, Sir, I should think the motion would have been more orderly if it was for expunging the petition from your Journals;—in this matter, Sir, I speak with the greatest deference.

But, Sir, after all, is *rejection* a wise measure towards the petition of three millions of subjects—breathing humility, loyalty, affection, and attachment—to you—to their King—to their country—and to the State?—This petition, Sir, is not a *demand* of the elective franchise only:—It is an humble solicitation that the wisdom of this House would be pleased to remove certain disabilities, and to extend to them some participation in the blessings of the Constitution.—Yet you are *this* moment going to reject this petition, and in the *very next* to pass a Bill acquiescing in a very considerable part of the prayer of the petition!—

One would think, Sir, the Roman Catholics had been guilty of some new act of criminality calling for pointed censure; but if we look into their conduct and consult the language of their petition we shall find no ground for such conjecture;—we shall find in it nothing but the humble language of a respectable body of people submitting with patience to those very grievances from which they intreat relief. But we are told, Sir, that the Legislature of this country can *never* agree in the prayer of that petition—can never cede to the Roman Catholics the franchise of election—nor one of those various other immunities which their Protestant fellow subjects enjoy;

joy ;—and we are told of preambles, and final resolutions that shall fix boundaries to the claim of Catholics—and to the concessions of Parliament !——But for God's sake, Sir, shall we, who are literally clad in mortality, presume to limit the wisdom of posterity, or circumscribe the rights or the liberality of future Parliaments ?—Let us rather deprecate such acts of legislative folly, and not arrogate to ourselves a privilege which we deny to our predecessors. Such a piece of arrogance would be an eternal reflection on the wisdom of the House of Commons, and its folly must be obvious to the meanest capacity. What !, Sir, at a time we are passing an act of Parliament to sooth the long suffering of the Roman Catholic, to attach his allegiance to the State, and his industry to the country ; is it wise in this House to declare—that, *be their deserts what they may*, they shall notwithstanding, be FOR EVER cut off from the Rights of Men !!!—Why Sir, this would be to say to the manly and constitutional ambition of three millions of Irish subjects—Exterminate yourselves, your talents, your property, and your industry for ever from this country, in which you can *never* hope for admission to the blessings of a free Constitution, or the ordinary rights of subjects !!!——Is this the Protestant language and the Protestant principle for which you are ready to spill your blood ?—Or do you hold it consistent, in the very moment you are professing a wish to unite the affections of the people, thus to adopt the old principle of jealousy and division, which first distinguished English usurpation in this country, by shutting out the Irish people from the English *constitutional* pale.—It is to say to the loyal Roman Catholic of Ireland—bring with you all your merits, all your loyalty, all your fidelity, industry, and virtue—
yet

yet we will put the *extinguisher* of prophecy upon your hopes, and darken every ray of your expectations, by the gloom of despair.

A Right Hon. Member has said there are two ways of immortalizing ourselves on this occasion; I agree with him: we may do it by our wisdom and liberality, or by our bigotry and folly; but I am for preferring the former mode.

Let me ask the Ministers of the country, while they are seconding the measure brought forward in this House by an Hon. Baronet high in their confidence, which they have advised, will they be weak enough to sanction, with the opinion of Government, such a principle as shall for ever exclude three fourths of the people of Ireland from the rights of subjects, and tell them they shall never participate the blessings of our Constitution?

For my own part, Sir, I am bound to declare, when I brought forward this petition, I was far from being actuated by seditious motives; convinced in my own mind of the principles and unshaken loyalty of that great and respectable body from whom it comes, I gave my sanction, with a view to their consolidation within the pale of the Constitution, believing most firmly that my success would prove the consolidation of Irish prosperity.

We have been told, Sir, that the Roman Catholics were deprived of the right of franchise under the principles of the Constitution, as established at the Revolution; but let me inquire whether ever such an infliction was held warrantable in that day? Let me vindicate the principles of our glorious Revolution—that second Magna Charta, from a charge so unjust; and let me tell Gentlemen that the elective franchise was not wrested from the Roman Catholics of Ireland,

until

fifty years after the Revolution, and this at a time when there was not in their demeanour the smallest foundation for a pretence to justify so severe a measure. But, Sir, admitting for argument sake, that any such cause for disqualification did at any time exist—does it follow, that the effect must for ever continue, when the cause has ceased?—That posterity shall for ever suffer for the errors of their ancestors, which they abjure?—Or is it in the littleness of man, or the arrogance of Legislature to assume a power which even the Deity disclaims, and to perpetuate to succeeding generations, the punishment of crimes long buried with the guilty?

The movers of this motion have raised in this country an honourable monument to their own names, in an endeavour to rescue from vice and intemperance the morals and the industry of the people;* and let me conjure them not now to sacrifice to the intemperance of a moment, the best incentives to the improvement of those morals, and of that industry;—and let me also conjure this House to avoid an impolitical attempt to arrogate a power disgraceful to their own judgment, and insulting to posterity.

Solicitor General. If I had been fortunate enough to have caught the observation of the Chair at an earlier period of the evening, I should have hoped to have saved gentlemen trouble.

I congratulate the house on the spirit it had manifested in support of the Protestant ascendancy. I have heard with great deliberation what has
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been

* Alluding to Mr. Latouche's motion in the House of Commons, in the Session 1791, for suppressing the inordinate use of spiritous liquors among the lower orders of people.

been urged with *great labour* by the honourable member who has just sat down ;—and though I have *industriously sat silent* on this business from its first promulgation, I feel it my duty now to declare my sentiments.—

Before I sit down, I shall offer to the consideration of the House a proposition which at the same time that it may appear more conciliatory than that which has been moved, may also seem adequate to the object of the Right Hon. mover, and to the persons of high consideration who sit near him : and if amongst them I should happen to carry with me the feelings and opinion of the Right Hon. Member who had just now spoke, (Mr. O'Neill) I shall, at the same time that I avail myself of the consequence which awaits upon his illustrious descent, and still more illustrious character, give an indulgence to the impulse which I feel from the earliest and the most uninterrupted friendship, and of which I have reason to be proud. When I rise with such a proposition I do not fear the imputation of deserting the Protestant cause. In my humble walk of life I have made some successful struggles for the Protestant interest of Ireland, and I have great family obligations to it ; I know that I am addressing a Protestant House of Commons ; and when I look about and see who they are that surround me, I know that the Protestant cause of Ireland will not suffer in their hands. In such a case, I disdain giving an answer to the imputation—that I am acting under the mandate of a Minister, however loved in private or most justly confided in by the public ; but in such a case, I cannot afford to make so deep a sacrifice to any Minister, as to risk my property, character, and every thing that is dear to a good Citizen, by suffering a dangerous encroachment to be made on the immutable principles of the
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British Constitution, which is the bulwark of our mutual strength. The old and steady bark may be sent adrift by the hurricane of Folly; but whilst a fragment remains to float I will cling to it, and when it is doomed to sink, I hope I shall not survive it long.

The petition before you, and the persons who have subscribed it, are to be treated with respect: They have approached you with decorum, and their conduct should be discriminated, though the amount of what they ask cannot be granted. I would wish to convince them, that it is because we are a Protestant House of Commons, feeling the tolerant and moderate principles by which only civil liberty has been fostered and matured, we have attended to and wished to meliorate their situation, in despite of those officious and presumptuous men who call themselves their advocates, but never were their friends; and who have dared to grasp at them as the instruments of outrage, and involve the country in calamity and confusion. I know the dispositions of my countrymen too well, to suppose that they will hand themselves over to factious men as their directors, and I know the Parliament too well to believe that it can be warped by the bugbear of inflammatory publications; I know that you will proceed with firmness and temper, and that you will deliver your thoughts with manly freedom, and without flattery or fear. Of what, are you to be afraid? I have heard indeed a language within and without these walls, and I have heard principles declared, in my opinion very desperate, very profligate and very dangerous, signed by those men who now come forward with a petition, which, though under a very modest guise, considering where it came from, I am inclined to suspect as a piece of the same principles.—We are not at this day to be taught by political Quacks, who tell us that radical reformatations are necessary

necessary in parliament. I have seen papers signed Tobias M'Kenna, with Simon Butler in the chair—and Napper Tandy lending his *courtenance*. 'Twas rather odd they could not contrive to set a better *face* on the matter—but, Sir, to use the language of an honourable member, behind me on a recent occasion (Lord Headford)—“Such fellows are too despicable for notice, and therefore I shall not drag them from their obscurity.”

I cannot help joining in the laugh at such ridiculous attempts to alarm your feelings, as if you could be swaggered out of your senses, or Bobadilled out of your reason. You have the confidence of the people, and they are conscious of the blessings they enjoy. I tell the Roman Catholics, for many of whom I have the most sincere personal regard, that for their sakes as well as ours, we will preserve that Constitution by which they have been, in common with others, protected and secured in the enjoyment of every thing that is dear to man. I will tell them that we ought not to suffer a rash and innovating spirit to disturb it: I will invite them to bend their prejudices to the State, but I will not suffer, if I can, the pride of the State to bend to their prejudices.

I will not like other gentlemen, undertake the disagreeable task of occurring to irksome periods of our history—the bare recital of which would be *infandum renovare dolorem*—I will rather rejoice that persecutions have ceased on all hands, and I think men should now look rather to conciliate dissensions, than tear open a-fresh the long-healed wounds of civil strife.—I am glad however the present question was introduced,—and that every member of this House is called forward to declare his sentiments; for
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while the collision flashes new light upon our understandings, and removes unfounded prejudice, it gives us the opportunity of manifesting to our Protestant constituents, *who is—or who is not* worthy to sit here now, or to be sent here again as their representative.

I am not surprised that such conversations have brought to the recollection of the Right Hon. representative of a great northern county, the dreadful and eventful history of the last Popish Parliament in Ireland. Are gentlemen aware that King James's Parliament, of the year 1689, not only repealed the act by which you all hold your titles to your estates, but that they proscribed 2,400 of the Protestant Nobility and Gentry of Ireland, without the shadow of pretence? That they snatched from the Protestant Church its provision and support; that they robbed the august House of Ormond of that well-earned bounty which the Crown had bestowed and the Legislature confirmed; that under the pretence of extending the commerce of Ireland, they had by their act of navigation, not only disclaimed all connexion with the empire of Britain, and pride of her naval strength, but robbed her of the means of preserving it with the same spirit that would now filch a feather from the wing of the British Eagle, at the moment that he is about to soar with victorious flight over the walls of Seringapatam? Are gentlemen aware that at the same period, the antient Protestant Corporation of Dublin was overturned; that their charter was wrested from them, and their Franchises bestowed on their opponents? Yes, the Corporation of Dublin do know it; they know that it is time to *speak out*; they know that the constituent body have a right to be heard; they will know where to look for confidence and protection.

In the course of the debate much allusion has been made to an intended preamble for the Catholic bill, to express something that would enjoin the present and future Parliaments from listening to future requisitions from the Catholic body.—That Sir, is a measure with which I cannot agree. We have no right to surrender our own deliberative faculties, and such a measure would shew us to be as irascible as we are impotent in the attempt. We should not poison or even embitter that cup, which when we offer in kindness, we should render as palatable as possible. It is blasphemous presumption to assume the attributes of prescience and omnipotence, by predestinating the future deliberations of ages that are to come, and to claim to ourselves foreknowledge absolute. We should act like honest and good centinels, and at the same time that we guard the portals of the Constitution against the obtruding insolence with which innovation would force itself into the inmost recesses of this, her ancient Temple, we will not say, that for ever we *would shut the gates of mercy on mankind.*

A day may come, and I hope will, when prejudices will be done away, and we can with kindness invite those who shall have manliness enough to lay them aside to participate our freedom ; and I trust the progress which we are now making must give, not only to our countrymen, but to the world, the most evincing proofs, and the brightest hope, that the benign spirit of our Constitution will :—

—Like a sweet oblivious antidote, cleanse the stuffed bosom of that perilous load that weighs upon the heart.

I shall now conclude by moving, “ that the prayer of the petition of Edward Byrne and others, purporting to be on behalf of themselves and the Roman Catholics of Ireland, so far as
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the same relates to a participation of the Elective Franchise, be not complied with now."

Mr. Latouche replied, he would be glad first to hear the sentiments of gentlemen upon it.

Mr. Brownlow was sorry the intention of his Rt. Hon. Friend seemed to be misunderstood; for, certainly, no disrespect to the petition was intended by his motion.—He said the petition stood in a predicament similar to that of a bill, which after it is received and considered may be rejected if it be found to contain improper matter.—This petition had been received with all deference, and had been ordered to lie on the table—for what end was this but that it might be perused by the members? And for what use was it perused but that its nature and tendency might be examined? His Rt. Hon. Friend having attentively considered it, is of opinion that it ought to be rejected, and therefore made the motion.—He hoped the House would not bind themselves for futurity, or resolve on any thing but the present rejection—for his part he had never bound himself to any particular line of Parliamentary conduct—he was not so foolish as to think of binding his successors—he had no objection to the Solicitor General's motion, as he thought that since the sentiments of the House were now fully known on the subject, the *manner* in which they were conveyed was of no consequence.

Mr. Marcus Beresford observed, there was another petition on the table, (the Belfast petition) which went much farther in its claims than the one now in debate; because it went to require a repeal of all the Popery laws now in force. He wished the motion of his Right Hon. Friend could

could be so worded, that the sense of the House might be declared upon both at once;—He was perfectly indifferent as to the mode.

Sir Thomas Osborne thought the Prayer of the Petition founded in justice and liberality, and that the time was now come, when we should begin to impart to our Roman Catholic brethren the rights of Franchise.

The Hon. F. Hutchinson. Sir, I rise under the impression of much concern, deeply sensible of the importance of the question, and feeling that my opinion differs intirely, and radically, from a great majority of those to whom I address myself.—But I think the time is now come, when every man ought to speak out; and I shall do so, regardless of any consequences, arising either from prejudice on the one hand, or popularity on the other.

I am sure the House will indulge me, while I state those reasons which govern my conduct on this night. However, before I enter into the question, I cannot avoid adverting to what has fallen from one of the principal law servants of the Crown, (The Solicitor General) who has been pleased to say, that he was glad the matter of the Catholic Petition has been agitated, because it was fitting that the Protestants of Ireland should know, who are to be trusted, and who are not to be trusted.

I am one of those who cannot be prevented from taking my part, by the pressure of such an observation. I will declare my sentiments as freely as they have arisen in mind; and I trust they are such as, notwithstanding the invidious observation of the Hon. Gentleman, will not be deemed

deemed to render me unworthy of the confidence of any description of the people.

I shall not utter any opinion, in the most remote degree inconsistent with the security of the present establishments, either in the Church or in the State—I venerate those establishments; and yield to no man in attachment to the Constitution; whose vigour I would restore, and whose equal and just principles I seek to re-establish.

I am persuaded, that in opposing the present motion, and the grounds upon which it has been supported, I am acting for the maintenance of the Dignity of Parliament—for the advancement of the true interests of this country—and not against the sense of the nation at large.

When the Hon. Baronet first brought in this Bill, a Right Hon. Gentleman (Mr. Ogle) rose in his place, and desired that the committal might be postponed to a late day. And he said, he made this proposition to the House on behalf of the Protestants of Ireland, that they might have time to consider of the measure, and to instruct their Representatives. The idea of my Right Hon. Friend was adopted. It was founded in wise precaution; and had too much National, and Parliamentary dignity, not to meet with universal approbation. The committal was deferred for nearly three weeks. That period was given for discussion. The sense of the nation was resorted to; and the result has been—a general acquiescence in favour of the Bill.

The apprehensions which had been expressed within these walls, did not excite the public mind. The bulk of the people, who have been long witnesses of the peaceable demeanor, and tried allegiance of their Catholic brethren, could not be prevailed upon to raise their voices in opposition to the intended liberality of Parliament.

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They remembered the Catholic loyalty for this century past—in times of civil commotion, and national weakness—during two Rebellions—and while the succession to the Crown was disputed by force of arms, and hostile invasion.

They had themselves been witnesses of the situation of this country in the year 1779—that memorable æra, when the Minister of the day informed this House, that we could derive no assistance from the sister kingdom.

When the pride of Great Britain was almost humbled in the dust—her armies led captive—one of the brightest jewels of the imperial crown torn from the diadem:—At that moment, when the combined fleets of the two great Catholic powers of Europe, urged a descent upon our coasts, the people recollect from whom we derived our protection then—We found it in the support of three millions of our fellow citizens—in the spirit of our national character—and in the virtue of our Catholic brethren. We found them ready to sacrifice their fortunes and their lives in defence of that Constitution, from the rights of which they had been long excluded, without any imputation of crime,—in a period of profound peace,—and in violation of the national faith.

We saw them forgetful of the oppressions which they had endured, and remembering only the public danger.

Shall we now say, that those very persons, by whose assistance we saved the State, and restored the Constitution, deserve the reprehension of Parliament? for such is the obvious tendency of the present motion, because they desire to be admitted *under that State to the rights of citizens.*

Whatever may be the tone of Gentlemen within these walls, this is not the public feeling. The conduct of the Catholics in the hour of difficulty

ficulty and danger, is not forgotten by the nation. And yet I have heard them on this night accused of sedition, and of an endeavour to disturb the Government. It is not difficult to utter the accusation—But I ask how this disposition appears? or why it is to be attributed to three millions of unoffending people, who are known to the State, only by their loyalty and their sufferings? Shall they be considered as seditious, because they desire to be admitted to some of the privileges which we possess, and which their ancestors inherited—to rights which are part of the Constitution—ascertained and guarded by the great charter, the fundamental law of the State? The charge is a national aspersion; it is answered by the history of your country, from the Revolution to the present day, and by the uniform experience of every one of you.

I cannot help expressing much concern at the manner in which this debate has proceeded. The subject does not appear to me to have been fairly stated, or argued upon true constitutional principles. The object of the petition has been misrepresented, and motives charged to the petitioners, which they are known not to entertain; imputations from which, a regard to the national character, which has been wounded through their sides, and the uniform tenor of their conduct for a century past ought to have protected them. In the place of calm investigation, we have heard little else but jealous accusations, and ill-placed doubts. Apprehensions with which it is difficult to reason, because there is nothing to combat, but a shadow, that vanishes as you approach it, and like the air-drawn dagger, eludes the grasp.

In speaking to this question, Gentlemen do not seem sufficiently to consider the peculiar situation
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of this country, nor to have turned their minds to that necessity, which is urging on, and must produce a reform in the system of Representation. I call upon you to reflect seriously within yourselves, whether the present system of exclusion ought to continue, or can be suffered to remain? Recollect that this is the only nation upon earth, in which the great body of the people are excluded, not only from all the civil establishments, but from those blessings which the *Constitution* confers.

The petitioners have approached this House with an humble and respectful application, desiring that persons of their persuasion may be restored to some share of the elective franchise. They claim a privilege attached by the Constitution to freehold property. And because they have made this claim, they are charged with having thereby manifested a desire to become the ruling power. And are said to have demanded from the Protestants, a surrender into their hands of the Government of the country.

Nothing contained in the petition can justify these charges. The misapprehension arises from not distinguishing between that franchise which the Constitution has annexed to freeholds; and those powers which compose the machine of the State.

The former is that right to which every citizen, possessing a certain kind of property, ought to be admitted. The latter consists in the Legislature, and the executive function.—In that authority which makes the law, and enforces its execution. In the former, is to be found that vital principle, which gives animation and strength to the representative body, which *so constituted*, diffuses among the people, the blessings of equal protection, and equal liberty.

It is for this privilege the Catholics have laid before you their humble petition. In which they contend, not for any speculative right, but for the *representation of property*—That foundation upon which the British Constitution rests its weight.

The spirit of monopoly might have taken alarm, if they had sought to interfere with power in the hands of Protestants, with your exclusive rights, the proud dominion of your ascendancy in the government, with the honors or emoluments of the State ; but those are not the objects which they seek :—they only appeal to your justice, to suffer them to return once more within the pale of the constitution.

They do not desire to become a part of the governing power.

To affix that meaning to their petition, is to confound what the petitioners have not confounded ;—the distinction between the constituent and the representative body.

I have heard them charged in the course of this debate, with an endeavour to force their way into the Houses of Parliament. But with what degree of justice this imputation is made, I leave to any reasonable mind to determine ; when it is considered, that the only object of their petition is, that their property may be represented *by Protestant representatives*.

But this is not the question which now engages our attention. We are not debating whether the elective franchise shall be restored to the Catholics, but whether their petition shall be dismissed, by a vote of rejection ? Whether the respectful and constitutional language of some of the principal commercial characters in the nation, who have addressed this House on behalf of themselves, and three millions of the people, shall be replied
to

to with marked severity and unparliamentary disapprobation?

I have gone somewhat at large into the subject of this petition, for the purpose of shewing, that it does not desire any thing, inconsistent with the constitution ; nor breath any spirit, inimical to good government and sound policy. Confirmed as I am in this opinion, I do not see upon what ground the present motion can be maintained ; and why the constant course of proceeding is now to be departed from. It is not usual for this House to answer petitions by specific resolutions :—the forms of Parliament are against it ; and those forms are founded in wisdom, and confirmed by experience.

Gentlemen who argue for the rejection of this petition, cannot therefore attempt to justify their conduct on Parliamentary precedent—Upon the necessity, of giving a negative to every petition, by its rejection, upon which, they are not prepared, to found any measure of relief. To such an argument every page of your journals, and the experience of every day, would furnish ample ground of contradiction.

This unusual and violent proceeding, can therefore only be vindicated on one or other of those grounds ;—either because the petitioners are undeserving from their own conduct ;—or because they have put forth requisitions, unconstitutional—and trenching upon the settled government in Church and State.—It cannot be upon the first ground, because, upon that, the history of your country, and your own experience, furnishes a full and ready refutation.—You know what the Catholics are, and what they have been in the most perilous times ; and it cannot be justified on the latter, because what they have humbly desired, is but the restoration of their
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ancient franchise in part ; which they enjoyed entire many years after the revolution :—which survived for a period of forty years, in its full and perfect state, this æra of Catholic humiliation—and the pride, and the prejudice—and the jealousy of the Protestant legislator, in the hour of his triumph.

The advocates for the present motion have resorted to other topics in their defence. They were well aware, that according to the course of Parliament, they could not stand justified in rejecting a petition :—respectful in its manner, and constitutional in its import. And therefore, in order to furnish themselves with some colourable ground of argument, they have judged it necessary to misrepresent the object, and the conduct of the petitioners ; and then with a condor, well suited to this mode of proceeding, they have argued, *from their own misrepresentations*, in support of the motion.

They have complained, that the petitioners have endeavoured to force their way into the State, and to push from their seats the Protestant legislators ; because they have preferred a petition desiring to be admitted to some participation in the election of *Protestant representatives*.

I have heard some of you, on this night, charge the Catholics with imputations, which, you ought to have been ashamed to utter, and which, I trust, I shall never hear repeated within these walls.

If you had been satisfied with traducing the respectable individuals, who have subscribed to this petition, you would only have been guilty of private defamation ;—but you have gone further ;—You have imputed to your Catholic brethren, principles, of which you know, they are incapable ; and which are disavowed alike by the
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decency of their petition—and the loyalty of their conduct—you have mistated their claims; and you have branded *your own misrepresentations* with the name of sedition.

I charge you with having traduced the Catholic character—you have defamed the nation by villifying the great body of its people;—but I do not say that you have been inconsistent—you have not ill adapted your arguments to your cause. A proceeding of unjustifiable severity, disrespectful to the humble petitions of the people, and disgraceful to the dignity of Parliament; upheld by private slander, and public misrepresentation.

Sir Hercules Langrishe stated the rights of petitioning, the orders of proceeding in Parliament concerning the receiving petitions, and the various modes by which they were to be treated and decided on. He observed, that the present petition expressed itself in terms of respect, and contained nothing beyond the rights of the subject, or the rules of Parliament; that therefore it had been received, read, and ordered to lie on the table; that the House had the power, according to their modes of proceeding, to suffer it in silence to remain on the table, or to take it up and decide upon it according to their discretion; that as to the prayer of it, “for a share in the elective franchise,” it did not become him to deliver an opinion; that when he engaged in the grateful office of submitting to Parliament propositions in favour of his Catholic brethren, it was the wish of his heart, as well as the suggestion of his judgment, to carry them as far as he could, without alarming the jealousies, reviving the prejudices, or opposing the opinions of those who were to be his judges, but no further; and for this reason his
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with was to promote accommodation, intercourse, and amity; that whatever we gave, we should if possible give unanimously; that whatever we gave, we should give with cordiality and good-will, with a confiding heart and an unrelenting hand; that it should appear the liberal testimony of a Protestant Parliament, in favour of the approved perseverance of Catholic loyalty—that as it was his wish to serve them, he would prove his sincerity by the practicability of services, rather than the magnitude of demands; that he would rather consult his prudence than his passions; rather ensure by moderation, than hazard by enterprize; that he therefore solicited a communication on this subject with as many Members of the Legislature as he could, without presumption, consult; that he found their opinions so decided against communicating this franchise at this time, that whatever might have been his private opinion, it would have been the height of impudence in him to have introduced it into his Bill, and the same motive prevents his adopting it now.—He vindicated the House from acting with disrespect to the petition, or traducing the petitioners; that what Gentlemen had spoken of with some warmth was the misrepresentations of newspapers, which in his mind had no weight; if they were to believe newspapers, (which he did not) they would be inclined to think, that some even of those petitioners themselves had been persuaded to traduce some of their own profession, and those men of the highest rank in character, and fortune, and information, that the kingdom can boast of—men who have long been the friends and benefactors of their country, and who were incapable of any crime, unless it be a crime to feel the pride of loyalty, and an ardent wish to

vindicate their character from injurious principles that were attributed to them.

Mr. Coote denied that the petition was treated with disrespect; it was very immaterial how it was rejected so it was not agreed to. He expressed his hope that the Roman Catholics would never be admitted to the elective franchise, nor to the full blessings of the Constitution. He never could consent to a measure of blending power with toleration, and toleration with power.—He would never consent that power should depart from the Protestant Ascendancy—and that Ascendancy, and that Power, he should ever support.

The Hon. Denis Brdewne, in answer to what had fallen from the Solicitor General relative to arguments bloated with French and American revolutions, defended his own arguments on that head. He had heard Gentlemen assert with bitterness, the petition should be rejected; but he had not heard a single reason why. He had been long in the habit of conversing with Roman Catholics; many of them were his particular and much esteemed friends. He was proud in avowing himself their advocate; and he was sure that there was nothing done in that House with respect to them, which could in the least interrupt the peace of the country.

Mr. Trench thought the question one of the most important ever agitated. He was for the rejection of the enfranchisement at present, though he was certain there were not more loyal subjects on earth than the Catholics of Ireland; but he thought the Protestants of the country would not be strong enough for them, armed with such a power.

Colonel

Colonel Blaquiere was surprized that any Hon. Member should bring forward such a petition. Passing of such Bills would in time dethrone the King, and subvert the Protestant succession.—Every member who recollects the Revolution of 1688, and the whole reign of James II. must see if this petition was granted, the kingdom would revert to the same state it was before that revolution. If such measures as these were frequently passed in that assembly, the pillars of the House must bend, its foundation shake, and the whole fabric totter on the brink of destruction.*—Sir, said he, I shall ever revere while I have breath, the Constitution as settled by our glorious deliverer William III. and if my tongue had lost its faculties, and my limbs were stretched motionless, and my whole frame sinking to dissolution, I should I think, still struggle for this principle.

Mr.

* A circumstance—no less apposite than lamentable, has stamped the Colonel's words with an air of *second sight*:—for on the very night se'night following,—the “*pillars of the House*” did not only “*bend*”—its foundation not only “*shake*” and “the whole building” not only “*totter on the brink*”—but was *whelmed* in the very *gulf* of “*destruction*;”—for while the House was sitting in committee, fortunately with a very thin attendance of the members, and but a few persons in the gallery, about 5 o'clock in the evening, some ignited foot, from the sheet iron funnels of the stoves in the lobby and corridore of the House, which had been frequently on fire in the course of the few nights preceeding, communicated with the wood work at the base of the great dome;—which in a few minutes extended to the whole roof, and in less than an hour and half the dome fell into the body of the House, and the whole of that exquisitely beautiful room, justly admired as a paragon of taste, grandeur and elegant accommodation, by all the travellers of Europe who have seen it, was reduced to an heap of ruins.—We are happy to add, that there was not superstition enough in the country, to obtain for the prophetic senator the character of a *wizard*; nor to impute to the Roman Catholic bill, which had passed the House, the mischief of this *ominous event*.

Mr. Pery entertained but few fears himself, as to any danger from the Catholic pretensions—but as many respectable men did fear them, they deserve consideration.—The example of Europe in this eventful day, might teach the House the danger of innovating with rash hand their political polity.—The enlightened liberality of the times, which by most men was urged as a reason for tearing up by the roots old establishments, was with him the strongest reason in the world for guarding against change—for what was this liberality? A wild democratic spirit which had gone abroad among the nations aiming at an universalequality among mankind. In this country there had sprung up some zealous apostles, the object of whose lives was to make profelytes to this doctrine, and they had found profelytes among the young and intemperate. It was not in the hope of giving ease or security to any sect of religionists that these men had engaged in their mission—it was with a design of promoting discord and confusion in the country, in order to attain a degree of celebrity which neither their situation in life—their talents—or their characters could ever, under any settled Government, obtain for them.—He alluded not to any member of that House—they had a theatre for the display of ability, and were not reduced to those wretched shifts for fame.—He then alluded to the bill now in its course through the House, and said it gave to the Catholics every thing necessary to their happiness, and was not at all dangerous to the Protestant interest.

Mr. M. Smith, I shall certainly vote against the rejection of this petition, but will not, at the same time pledge myself to support its prayer, if that prayer shall come to be coolly and dispassionately

passionately canvassed; for though I look to the utter extinction of the Penal Code, as to the consummation of this country's prosperity, yet I would not be understood to say, or to have said, that I thought the fulness of time was now come, when such a measure should take place. As to the question before the House, I confess I thought it had been precluded by our resolution of Saturday last—to receive the petition; for a resolution *to receive*, and a resolution *not to reject*, seemed to my humble understanding to be synonymous; but as some very respectable Gentlemen entertain a different opinion, I am willing to surrender my sentiment upon the subject and to adopt theirs. It has been said that a rejection of this petition will be in no wise disrespectful to those in whose behalf it has been presented; but, Sir, I hold that such a measure will be not only highly disrespectful to those persons, but derogatory in a very great degree from the dignity of this House, and therefore I will oppose it to the utmost of my ability. Our country is divided into two great communities—the Protestants and the Roman Catholics. Their relative numbers I do not accurately know; nor, if I did know, would I be fond of stating; but the former is the ascendant, the latter the depressed party in the State. Thus circumstanced, the latter, in the humble garb and in the language of supplication, approach their ascendant fellow citizens, and pray to be admitted to such a participation of a great constitutional privilege, as the wisdom and justice of those applied to may suggest: And is this the petition, Sir, that ought to receive *no answer*? Is this a petition that we should not deign even to consider? Is it a petition that ought to be rejected, not only *without debate*, but *with disdain*? Believe me, Sir, if ever there was a time when this House was
called

called upon to act with calmness as well as firmness, with moderation as well as magnanimity, it is the present occasion. We are, as the ascendant body in the State, now solemnly called upon to sit in judgment upon the supplication, and to decide upon the important claim of our Roman Catholic fellow citizens; and shall we either decline the decision altogether, or enter upon it with heat, with passion, or with prejudice? Is there any other power upon earth to which the petitioners could apply? Is it unreasonable or unnatural that they should solicit what they seek? And shall we not, on this awful occasion, while we sit as judges upon the momentous claims and supplications of our fellow subjects, hear, *with patience hear*, and consider what may be urged in their behalf? Shall we abjure our own dignity, and insult their feelings by dismissing them from our bar unheeded and unheard? Sir, I wish the House to act with more kindness to them, and with more respect to itself. Let us at least consider their prayer; and if, on due deliberation, we shall deem a compliance with it inexpedient, let our refusal be signified with kindness, not with contempt; with dignity, but not with disdain. Let our decision be firm, but not insulting; and let it be such as while it *secures* us, may for the present at least *satisfy* them. Sir, Gentlemen have said, that a compliance with the prayer of this petition may not, for the present, be *expedient*; but I deny, utterly and absolutely deny, that it would be *unconstitutional*. Whence are we to date our constitution? Where shall we find the great foundation of it? Is it not in the revolution of 1688? Then it was that our Constitution was fixed; then were all its *Palladia* defined and ensured; every thing deemed noxious to its vital principle was then removed, and nothing but what was held salutary was suffered to remain.

remain. From thence, therefore, we are to date the sanity, and the purity of our Constitution; and yet from thence down to the reign of George II. a period of little less than forty years, Roman Catholics were suffered to enjoy that franchise fully and entirely, the smallest portion of which, it is now said cannot be imparted to them without a surrender of the Constitution:—Was then our Constitution surrendered at the Revolution of 1688? Was it surrendered into the hands of Roman Catholics during the reigns of William III. and of Anne, when the Penal code became the law of the land? or was the accession of the Brunswick family marked by a surrender of the Constitution of our country? If to communicate any share of the elective franchise to Roman Catholics would be to betray our Constitution, then does it follow, of necessity, that during the whole of the period which I have mentioned, our constitution stood betrayed or unasserted. But it may be asked, where lies the difference between this measure's being *inexpedient* or *unconstitutional*? Sir, the difference is great indeed, and in my opinion, obvious; its being *inexpedient* is a reason against our imparting it *now*; but its being *unconstitutional* would be a justification for withholding it *for ever*. Hence it is, Sir, that I combat the unwarranted and the impolitic position that is laid down.—I deprecate the *perpetual* exclusion of our Roman Catholic brethren from an equal share of all our civil rights and a free participation of the blessings of our constitution.

I know that such an exclusion is not within our power—but I must resist a doctrine which, if it were to have any effect, could only serve to mislead posterity or to dishonour ourselves.

Those being my sentiments, Sir, I shall give my negative to the depending motion.

Mr.

Mr. Graydon said that, neither in the former debate of Saturday nor, hitherto, in this, had he obtruded on the House any opinion respecting this great constitutional question, as he wished to hear, from great and respectable authorities on both sides of it, those sentiments and declarations, which the occasion would properly call forth, and which would assist them in either forming or connecting their judgment. Several gentlemen having, however, called upon Members to speak freely and decidedly their opinions, and one gentleman, having expressed himself, as conveying an intimation to the House, that all those, who voted against the rejection of the petition, voted, in reality, for communicating to the Roman Catholics a right of suffrage; he thought it necessary to rise and declare, in a few words, the best determination he could form on this subject.

He would premise what he had to say, by expressing his concern that he found himself obliged to differ on this question with the Right Hon. mover of it, a man, whose many and conspicuous public and private virtues had justly raised him to the rank of one of the first citizens of the State, but he could not argue with him, as to the prudence and expediency of treating the petition in the manner he had proposed. He would not hesitate to declare, in the most explicit terms, that in his judgment, the right of Suffrage should not be, at this time, communicated to the Roman Catholics, because he was decidedly of opinion that such a communication, in the present state of this country and temper of the times, would either endanger the Protestant ascendancy, as it had been called, or prove destructive to the Roman Catholics themselves.—That body is not now prepared to receive or to exercise it with benefit

benefit to the country ;—but at the same time, it would be unwise as wholly ineffectual, to say or to do any thing, which might seem to preclude them from participating in that right hereafter.—Any man, who considered the present state of this country, would clearly see that, if the principles of our constitution shall remain as they are at this day, the Roman Catholics must be admitted, in time, to what they at present solicit, rather prematurely.—The legislature has already opened to them the way to the acquisition of property, by all possible means, and four fifths of the people of any country, pursuing that object through the road of industry, must obtain a proportionable share in the possession of the soil. Will any man say that four fifths of the possessors of freeholds, or equivalents to freeholds, shall remain without representation in this country ? the idea is too absurd to be admitted for a moment—There cannot therefore remain a doubt that, in the common and ordinary progress of the acquisition of property, the Roman Catholics of this kingdom will become entitled to a large portion of legislative power in it. What then is the policy that wisdom would suggest to be pursued ? To prepare their minds and fashion their political manners for the exercise of that power, when the day shall arrive that shall bring with it a necessity of communicating it to them.—We should do every thing, that may tend to associate them to their Protestant brethren and assimilate their habits, their manners, and political opinions with ours : At the present time, such a communication of power would tend to the very reverse, it would set up distracted councils and divided interests, and introduce, between the two bodies, a struggle for ascendancy, before the Roman Catholic was prepared by intermixing with Protestants, or sufficiently established in the

landed interest of the country to feel that the true political objects of both were one and the same.

Thus a breach between the two, instead of a union, would be promoted, and it must terminate either in the overthrow of the present ruling power, or the destruction of the Roman Catholic growing one. The bill now before the House, will no doubt contribute much to further the principle of associating the two bodies, but the motion now made, so far as it goes, directly tends to the infringement of it—this must appear from considering the ordinary method of proceeding, in cases of a similar nature. Whenever a bill is introduced, all classes of people have a right to petition Parliament upon the subject of it. The petitioners are almost universally received; there is hardly an instance of rejection.—If the member, who introduces the petition, thinks it a proper subject of adoption, he takes it up, whilst the bill is depending, and moves that the committee, on the bill, may be empowered to receive a clause or clauses, pursuant to the prayer of the petition; any other member may do the same;—the object of the petition is then fairly before the House, and we are called upon to decide whether it be such a one as is admissible or not; but, as in the present instance, where such a step is not taken, the petition remains silently upon the table; no farther notice is had of it; the bill goes through the Committee, and the act, when it passes, is the proper and dignified answer of the House to the prayer of the petition.—Then why depart, in this case, from this grave, customary form? and why mark a petition, from so respectable a body of our fellow-subjects, with peculiar reprobation?—Such a departure from the common process will convey an appearance of intemperance and aversion, and, upon such an occasion, appearances, should

should be regarded as highly important, and we should carefully guard against even misrepresentation out of doors.—Every thing conciliatory, nothing irritating, should accompany the progress of the bill; all harsh manner of conducting it should be avoided; as contradictory to the avowed and apparent principle on which it is founded.—Besides, let us consider whether it will operate in effect against the intention of those who are most zealous for rejecting the petition, and who ground their treatment of it upon a desire to cut off the expectations of the Roman Catholics.—It is certain this question will not pass without a division. It is almost as certain, that the bill, now before the House, will pass unanimously.—How will this transaction then appear upon the votes?—that the House with one voice agreed to relax the laws that bear hard upon the Roman Catholics of this country, and that there were even some who did not think it proper to reject a petition of theirs, which claimed the right of suffrage.

It therefore appeared to him extremely unwise to step aside from the usual mode of proceeding in this instance, tending to widen, instead of closing the difference between Protestants and Roman Catholics, and probably introducing consequences very detrimental to the common interest of both, without a possibility of producing any benefit to either.—He would, therefore, vote against rejecting the petition in this manner.

Mr. Curran was convinced of the rectitude of intention on the part of the Right. Hon. mover of this question; but he feared the mode of rejection as abrupt, and its consequences as serious. What the petitioners asked, was merely such share in the constitution and elective franchise, as the House should think it wise to grant, and would it be decent to give an unqualified rejection

rejection to their request? He for his own part had no Roman Catholic connexions, and he trusted he had credit enough in that house to guard him from the suspicion of being disposed to gratify a wild spirit of innovation subversive of the constitution. But he thought when one part of the community were appealed to as judges in their own cause, their discussion should not be attended with a shout of victory; they should decide with coolness and moderation; for he should rather imitate the judge who dismisses with a sigh, than the victor who bears down his adversary, without deigning to examine his supplication. He was of opinion it was better the present motion should be withdrawn as unnecessary:—the petition had been received and ordered to lie on the table:—he therefore conceived the petition already disposed of, without any farther proceeding—for surely the House was not so low in public respect as that nothing was to be understood from its silence.—This mode of conveying its determination to the petitioners would, he thought, the most proper and conciliating;—It would tell the Catholics “ We feel you are not
 “ represented, we feel our own superiority, but
 “ we do not meanly exult in your depression;
 “ and we wish for the day when you may be
 “ found fully qualified for equality, though we
 “ do not clearly see it now”—This would in his idea be better, than an abrupt and irritating rejection—for if he were a friend to the wildest schemes of ambition attributed to the Catholics, he would recommend the rejection of the present petition—as such a measure could tend only to stimulate ambition to precipitancy,—and excite passion and discontent where the contrary feelings were desirable.—There was a point of Catholic liberality and Protestant justice which must unite
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to form the bonds of Catholic emancipation, and on the present occasion he would adopt the dignified conduct of executive government, which does not proudly reject the measures of the two other branches of the legislature, but signifies its disapprobation by simply withholding its assent.

Mr. Hardy said, that in the course of his parliamentary existence, few things, indeed nothing almost, had given him so much concern as the debate which had taken place on this petition, and the mode in which it had been conducted. That the motion was well intended he could entertain no doubt, but that it could attain the objects it aimed at, he entertained but little expectation. His Hon. and learned friend (*Mr. Curran*) had appealed to the good sense and moderation of the House, in language so eloquent, and so conciliatory, as left him scarcely any thing to say on that head, and the learned gentleman behind him (*Mr. M. Smith*) had spoke with so much legal and historical knowledge, and such perspicuity on the subject, as was unanswerable. Other gentlemen had spoken in the course of the night, to whom he thought it necessary to make some reply to; a Rt. Hon. Gentleman (*Mr. B. Conyngham*) had said, he wished to hear the opinions of gentlemen, and that the House should speak out on the subject. He agreed with the Right Hon. Gentleman; he wished so too. But how speak out? Would the determination of the House, as to the elective franchise, whatever that determination might be, be accompanied with less dignity, or less acquiesced in, if the question was brought before them in a separate and regular form, than now, where it was so unexpectedly brought forward, and the House of Commons obliged to travel out of its way to give an

an opinion as to the elective franchise, which no Member of the House had called upon it to declare. The prayer of the petition went indeed to the franchise, and as it was evident to every man, that such a requisition would not now be complied with, the House, in his opinion took the wisest and safest mode of disposing of that petition, by suffering it to lie quietly on the table, and no proceedings to be had upon it. If this was the usual mode, he would ask why depart from that mode now, when not only the silence of gentlemen within doors upon the subject, but every circumstance of the times, and the peculiar situation of the petitioners, seemed to demand a prudent adherence to it. Had any extraordinary event taken place since Saturday, when the petition had been brought in, read with great form, and unanimously received, as that the minds of gentlemen should depart from their remarkable moderation and good humour of that day? He had heard of none, and whatever vote the House might come to that night, it was evident that gentlemen, many at least, thought with him on the subject, from the approbation with which they seemed to receive an Hon. and learned Gentleman's (the Solicitor General's) amendment over the way. The Hon. Gentleman's motion was unquestionably much better than the original one, though not perhaps exactly agreeable to parliamentary usage. As to the mode which he took to recommend it, he (Mr. Hardy) did not think it either congenial to the learned gentleman's acknowledged philanthropy and good humour, or at all adapted to the spirit of the motion itself. The learned gentleman set out with a very prudent and benign declaration that he would not tread in the steps of other gentlemen who had dwelt so much on former divisions and

and hostilities in this country. It was an invidious and ungrateful subject—he would have nothing to do with it. And how does the learned gentleman adhere to his declaration? By not only touching on the subject, but going into a detailed and very circumstantial history of the proceedings of James the Second's Parliament in Ireland, which, says he, attainted your ancestors, confiscated the estates of the amiable and illustrious Duke of Ormond, and was guilty of all atrocious acts imaginable. Such was the learned gentleman's prefatory speech to a most pacific amendment. Mr. Hardy said he deprecated all such appeals to the passions, instead of the understanding. If ever there was a time when moderation was peculiarly necessary, it was at present, firmness was equally so; the one did not exclude the other; proper firmness and true moderation were in fact the same. The House was called upon to decide on one of the most important political questions that could be imagined, not calmly, nor regularly, but in a sort of sudden tumultuous manner, perfectly inconsistent with the slow, temperate, deliberate attention which they had hitherto bestowed on the subject. Was every minute and subordinate clause of the bill to undergo the most anxious revision, and the most important circumstance in its whole history to be instantly decided on? Or could he, who had expressly stated on Saturday night, that if the bill contained any clause which mentioned the elective franchise, it should be postponed till next session, merely on account of the magnitude of such a question, now reject, in an instant, a petition, already entertained, because it touched on that subject. Was there not too much heat and violence in all this, and were these the proper qualities to enter into conference with such a number
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of our fellow subjects ? The exordium of Cæsar's speech on the Cataline conspiracy, and the excellent advice which it contained, might, he thought, be justly given on this occasion, "*Omnes homines, qui de rebus dubiis consultant, ab odio, inimicitia, ira, vacuos esse decet.*" A Right Hon. Gentleman had said, "Let the Roman Catholics abandon their prejudices and we shall abandon ours :". And certainly whilst such prejudices existed on both sides, it was not possible for the parties to come to a final amicable settlement. The question, therefore, with regard to the elective franchise, was at present, in fact, though silently, disposed of, and why then resort to this abrupt unnecessary rejection of the petition ? As to the elective franchise, he saw no substantial reason against a Roman Catholic gentleman of property and respectability being intrusted with it ; this he spoke of now, abstractedly, for he scarcely expected (if he could judge from the complection of the present times) to see any such event taking place ; however, he trusted in God, his child might live to see it ; when by a gradual incorporation of all fellow subjects, of whatever religious denominations, the grosser errors and doctrines of Popery would be comparatively lost in the superior purity of the Protestant religion, and both parties attend to the great characteristic and precept of their common Christian faith, "Peace and good will towards men."

An Hon. Gentleman, (Mr. Pery) had spoken in an animated manner, of the promulgation of some extraordinary political tenets, which he considered as inimical to all sound and sober government. Mr. Hardy said, he partly agreed with him, but it must be a weak constitution indeed which could not resist such attacks. As to the discussion of political questions, he always approved

approved of for this reason, that truth was ultimately benefited by it. If men wrote servilely or absurdly, still they generally met with those who would answer them; and thus even their imbecility was made to contribute to the growth and to the extent of human reason.

Sir Robert Filmer was answered by Mr. Locke, and thus his nonsensical ideas, as to Government, were eventually the means of justifying the revolution. It was therefore wise in every free Government to leave such publications to their own fate; if they contained any good in them, they would necessarily so far benefit mankind; if they did not, what could preserve them from oblivion, except the folly of noticing them?—As to the petition, he again repeated, he did not think himself justified in rejecting it, though as to the object of it, (the elective franchise) he was equally decided that it could not immediately be granted. In the present situation of the country it would be just the most impolitic step that any statesman could take. For, what was the duty of a statesman before he offered any great and original measure to the public? To consider what he must immediately *hazard*, and what he may eventually gain. In this case the tranquillity of the country would be instantly shaken to pieces, and on the other hand would be put in the balance, a privilege very imperfectly exercised, and under such restrictions as would not, in all probability, gratify the party to whom it was restored.—Not that he doubted that granting it in the manner proposed by some of the Roman Catholic community, would meet the wishes of the moderate amongst them.—He believed it would. But would it, fettered as it necessarily must be on its onset, gratify the more sanguine and violent, who, in times, heated like the present, and who generally, indeed always, leave
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the moderate, far, far behind them?—If he could judge from some publications it would not. Some Gentlemen in the course of the debate, had advanced a most extraordinary position indeed—They said “That in no possible situation of the country could the elective franchise be given to the Roman Catholics with any safety to the State.” Without animadverting on the extreme facility with which Gentlemen undertook to dispose of futurity in this manner, and to prescribe to other times, and other Parliaments, who without any violent effort of imagination might be presumed to view this question in a very different light from that in which it was then regarded; without dwelling on the happy tranquillity of mind with which Gentlemen could view the revolutions that were then going on in the world, and which might possibly touch this country in their progress, as well as others; waving all this, he should briefly observe that the Roman Catholic laws were not founded, like the Magna Charta, or the Petition of Right, on great principles of truth which must remain the same in all times, and all vicissitudes whatever; No—They were founded on policy merely, a policy which other times made it necessary to resort to certainly, but as the times altered and passed away, the policy should be altered and pass away also—Gentlemen therefore who insisted so much on the immutability of some particular Roman Catholic laws, were singularly unfortunate in selecting *them* as the objects of perpetual, unchanging regard; for, of all laws whatever, such laws, from the very nature of them, must be peculiarly and necessarily most subject to change. He had spoken of the quiet of the country, and so convinced was he of the necessity, the absolute necessity of maintaining it, at all events, that there was no-
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thing independent of the constitution which he would not sacrifice to preserve it. In this he was sure he spoke like a friend to the people, who under the shade of that tranquillity, would gradually obtain their just consequence in the state, and so be enabled to oppose all its enemies, internal or otherwise; and he doubted not but the day would yet come, when the gentlemen of that House would be enabled to call in aid of their constitutional exertions, a yeomanry very different from the present, a yeomanry of decent knowledge, of comfortable circumstances, and alive to the feelings of freemen, and who would then exercise, with credit to themselves and advantage to their country, that elective franchise, which, if then thrown into their hands, wildly and indiscreetly, as some theorists suggested, would only prove an instrument in the hands of every ambitious, opulent neighbour, for the aggrandisement of that neighbour, and their own repeated humiliation. He concluded with declaring, that he was sorry the question had been brought forward, but as it was, he must give it his negative.

Mr. Holmes thought it would be impolitic to communicate the elective franchise to the Roman Catholics until we had first given them education; this was a mean object of the Bill before the House, and when we see its operation, it would be time enough to go farther.

The Right Hon. W. B. Ponsonby. I rise to support the resolution of the Right Hon. Gentleman (Mr. Latouche). We cannot suffer this petition to go to a Committee; if we did, we should seem to approve its principles; but as we disapprove it, I would tell them boldly that we will not grant their claim,

Right

Right Hon. Mr. Hobart. I rise with great satisfaction to concur precisely with my Right Hon. friend. I never felt more pleasure in my life than in concurring with him. I wish the petition had never been presented—it was done, I believe, rather with a view to defeat the Bill, than to forward it, for it was well known the House could not concur.

As to the Roman Catholics, I think it the very reverse of disrespect not to give an answer to their petition: I would not treat any body of men with disrespect: I have an anxious wish for the happiness of the people of this kingdom of all descriptions, the Roman Catholics as well as others; but regarding as I do, the Protestant Constitution, I cannot concur in the petition, nor have I any fear in rejecting it.

The Attorney General supported the motion on the general principles adduced by other members in the course of the debate.—He contended that Roman Catholics, under a privation of franchise, were not worse situated than above two thirds of the Protestants of this country; and he concluded by saying, he hoped the day would come, when the Catholics and Protestants of this country would be but one people, united for the strength and happiness of the empire.

Colonel Hutchinson. I should not think of rising at this late hour of the night, were it not absolutely necessary from the part I took in a former debate.—I would rather incur the guilt of presumption, by pressing myself on the wearied attention of this House, than have it supposed, for a moment, that I had abandoned the ground on which I once stood.

During

During the course of this debate I have heard very extraordinary language from an Hon. member, for whom I have long entertained great personal regard and respect, language on which I shall not comment, because I hope never again to hear it repeated within these walls; but this much I must say, that the gentlemen, who signed that petition, are persons of property, respectability and character; Mr. Byrne alone pays 100,000*l.* a year duty to his majesty's revenue—the capital, which such a trade requires, must be large indeed, and gives *some* security for the peaceable and loyal conduct of him who possesses it—If there is a man in the world engaged from interested motives to preserve the tranquillity of a country, it is a merchant, who possesses a large floating property, which may vanish on the appearance of civil convulsion, or be entirely annihilated by the events of external warfare—This canvas of the personal merits and demerits of petitioners to this House is new parliamentary doctrine, and which ought not to be endured; we are the servants of the people, and not their masters—They have a right to petition us, provided they do it in a decorous, and respectful manner; and there is no man who contends that this is not a decorous, and respectful petition—Who will venture to appear before you, if he shall be obliged to endure this fiery ordeal, and to submit to such treatment?—Believe me it is a wretched employment for the Parliament of Ireland, to pass day after day, and night after night in libelling the great majority of the Irish nation.

Much applause has been given to the present bill, now before us—I am willing to give it some—I like its principle; it is the principle of concession to the Catholic body, which I admire and applaud—

applaud—yet how far does it go? What does this boasted bill give? What restraints will remain after it has passed into a law?—No Catholic, however brave his spirit, or consummate his military talents, can command a company of foot in your service, nor, had he the enterprizing genius of Cooke, or Columbus, could he command the smallest sloop in your fleet—If half of a county were his own estate, he could not preserve its peace by acting as a magistrate, or take care of his property by performing the duties of a grand juror—Such are some of the restraints under which the *happy, fortunate, and favoured* Catholic will still continue to labour.

It is said that they retain prejudices adverse to the constitution—What is meant by this assertion I have not sagacity sufficient to discover—It cannot surely be maintained, that there is any thing in their religion which makes them the natural enemies of a free and admirable form of government—In order to do away this aspersion, it will be unnecessary for me to have recourse to the writings of the French philosophers, to the eloquence of the French orators, to the actions of the French nation—The conduct of the Irish Catholics themselves is a sufficient answer to this unfounded insinuation—Did you not at a late period, when every thing that could be dear and honourable to you as a nation was at stake, find them in arms by your side, in order to recover that liberty, which they are not suffered to enjoy, and to regenerate that constitution, into whose pale they were not allowed to enter? In times of demand, and danger, they were your associates, your soldiers, your defenders; now in a moment of tranquillity, when you think you have no occasion for their services, you reject, and calumniate them—You called upon them in 79 to assist
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you in recovering your commerce, in re-establishing your constitution, in defending your country against a foreign invasion—your call was a proof of your weakness, and of your fears—their obedience was a proof of their affection, and of their strength—Did they seize on a dangerous, and critical moment, in order to embarrass your affairs? Did they then remember the oppression or misery of ages? They saw in the establishment of Protestant liberty, if not their own emancipation, at least the pride, and the glory of the country which had given them birth.

It is nonsense I am sure, to talk to you of gratitude, but I would address one word to your own understanding.

If the revolution of 82 could not have been brought about but by the co-operation of the Catholic body, can there be any prosperity, any power, any real strength in Ireland, unless the Protestants condescend to coalesce with them, and all descriptions of men shall be knit together in the bonds of common union and common affection.

Gentlemen have talked of Papists, and of drawing swords—I almost hoped not to have heard such language used at this day—I answer it by saying, that the great body of Catholics in this kingdom by no means deserve that severe appellation—I believe the number of Papists to be few—they would be much fewer, if those of the established church were willing to think, and to speak of them with more liberality, and less misrepresentation—Fortunately for this country Catholic bigotry have not kept peace with Protestant prejudice—what is meant by drawing of swords I cannot tell of this, I am convinced, and I call upon any man to deny it if he can, that his majesty does not possess
a more

a more peaceable, and more loyal body of subjects, than the Catholics of Ireland—To prove this, my assertion would be unnecessary—I appeal to their conduct, to their tried conduct for a century—I defy malignity itself to impute any designs to them, which are hostile to the State, the Church, or the King.

Let me now revert to your conduct on this night.

The Catholics have presumed to state to you, (who, if not their representatives, are undoubtedly their legislators and governors) and to this their native country, the oppressions, and grievances, under which they labour—for such their conduct, you traduce their motives, you malign their characters, you talk of fears, which you do not feel, and of dangers, which you do not apprehend, and are willing to seize on this or that unauthorised expression of this or that unauthorised individual, in order to justify you in proscribing the whole Catholic body, and dismissing from your bar, with outrage, and indignation, the petition of three millions of your people—Are these the wise principles of the Protestant ascendancy? Are these the firm foundations of liberty, of truth, and security, on which it is built? Go one step farther—condemn them to hug their chains, order them not to feel as men—command them not to use their recollection, or their eyesight; and not to remember the events of their own history, or that which has passed in their own times in America, and is now passing in France, and in Poland.

Something has been said of wild and innovating systems of reformation, and of factions existing in this country—For myself I will say, that

that I am no innovator, I belong to no faction.

Here the Solicitor General rose to explain, that he did not any way allude to the Hon. Member, but to that blasted society called United Irishmen. He was sorry he had sat down without calling those fellows to the bar, but he now pledged himself to the House that he would do it.

Sir, resumed *Colonel Hutchinson*, I speak no language but my own—If any man in this country has infringed the laws, the laws are equal to punish him. It is peculiarly the duty of gentlemen in office to see them enforced—I acknowledge with satisfaction, and with pride that I have talked of the reformation of your penal code—I shall continue to talk this language to you as long as I continue to exist; for in that reformation alone I see the future prosperity of my country, and that prosperity I value more than life—equal to honor.

Mr. Grattan. I find myself under difficulty to express how much I regard the mover, and condemn the motion. It is a measure as strong and as violent as any ever perhaps propounded in Parliament. You are to reject a petition, which you have received already, decorous in its manner, regular in its introduction, and respectable from its signatures. You reject it, because it comes from a great body of Roman Catholics, and applies, on behalf of that body, for some small share of freedom. Thus you are not only to refuse, but extinguish the principle—you are not only to disappoint, but insult the petitioner. You put the rejection on grounds which, you know, are

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fictitious.

fictionous. You say this House must answer the petition. Then I am to understand, every petition with which you do not comply, you are to reject by way of answer.—There is a petition now before you touching the improvement of the brewery, which you have not rejected nor complied with; the petitions last year against the Police, of all the corporations of Dublin, Did you reject them? *Did you* comply with them?

But there is another petition on our table—a petition from the capital of Ulster—a petition from the most rising, spirited, and commercial town in the kingdom, Belfast, that goes infinitely farther than the Roman Catholic, in their prayer for indulgences. This petition, on a division, you received. The humble petition of the Catholics you reject; or is it proposed, in order to preserve consistency, to reject the Belfast petition as well as the Catholic, and thus commit a violence on the Protestant as well as the Catholic subject? on the first for desiring freedom for his fellow-citizen, and on the last for desiring it for himself?

The English Parliament in its inveteracy towards the Americans, did not go this length.—They did not reject the petitions of the Americans. There were some Members who did, indeed, talk as you have done, with respect to the persons of the Americans.—They derided Hancock and his crew, or Adams and his crew, as some here have derided Mr. Byrne and his associates. I was concerned and ashamed to hear certain observations on the names and conditions of the petitioners, and more concerned to find such observations received and echoed by the other side of the House, with applause and triumph. The first name to that petition, is one of
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the first merchants in Ireland ; his credit would go farther than the character of most of our modern courtier placemen : the others, who have been outraged, are men of property, respectability, of honest and useful application to extend your trade, for the exercise of which they are now the subject of your derision. What Catholic in this country will ever be a merchant ? or what merchant a petitioner, if he is to undergo this fiery ordeal, and to be the subject of scorn of the Commons, because he has been an instrument and promoter of commerce ? It is not so in England.—I do not hear that the great merchants there are lightly treated or outraged by the ministerial part of the House of Commons in England ; that Mr. Thornton and Mr. Long have been a subject of disrespect. I do not remember to have read that Alderman Beckford or Sir John Barnard met with any such treatment ; and yet it is much more improper in the case of merchants subscribing the petition, because they are not present nor represented, and therefore are not protected, and in a peculiar manner intitled to your liberality.—A Right Hon. Member (high in confidence) from whose quarter of the House this intemperate disrespect, and noise proceeded, has informed you that the petition was conceived with a view to defeat the Bill. Sir, the Right Hon. Member is wholly unfounded in the charge, and he ought to be particularly cautious to avoid reflections on the people of this country. It is not the province of a Lord Lieutenant's Secretary to make animadversions, prejudicial to the reputation even of the Roman Catholics of this country. They too are subjects to be defended against insinuations, as well as injuries and outrage.—I therefore feel myself under the necessity of observing on the

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Right Hon. Member, so far as to say, that his charge was highly improper and entirely unfounded ; and I must further add, that whenever any assault is made on the character of the commercial part of this country by a cry even in this House, I will not be wanting to rebuke such levity.

The matter of the petition has been much misrepresented as well as the character of the petitioners. It has been stated that it is an application to establish a Catholic Parliament.—Sir, it is an application to be permitted to vote at elections, and not to sit in Parliament ; and it is an application for such a share of that elective franchise as shall bear no proportion to your's, and therefore it is an application for some share of the blessings of the Constitution, under the Protestant Ascendancy, not in opposition to it. Calculate, condescend to reckon what would be the number of the Protestant and Catholic voters, if that share in the proportion desired was granted, and you will find the result to be the opposite to your conclusion ;—you will find that the proportion of suffrage is out of all comparison greater than the Catholic ; that is you will find Protestant Ascendancy preserved, and Catholic freedom permitted ; or, in other words, you will find their liberty is your strength, and you will find, you are not afraid of losing your constitutional power, but of adding to it ; that your panic does not suffer your understanding to perceive your own weakness, or provide for your own strength ; just as your property in land is better secured by their share of property in land, so your property in the Constitution is better secured by their share of property in the Constitution. This very principle, which is the principle of their petition, is the preamble of your own law :—Whereas it must
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tend to the prosperity of this kingdom to admit subjects of every denomination; into what? A share in the blessings of our free Constitution. In fine, does it not depend upon you what share they shall have, and may not you secure your own proportion of power, and their proportion of freedom; but it is said, if they have any share, however small, in the Constitution, they will get at last the Ascendancy?—What proof is there offered of this? what proof attempted?—None—Mere assertion, the assertion of panic, and if it has any meaning at all except panic and weakness, it means, that if you give the Catholics share in the blessings of your Constitution, they will, by that intermixture, assimilate to you;—that is, they will be in politics Protestant, and then you yourselves may perhaps be inclined to go further.

It is not always possible to refute objections by example as well as reason, but the objection now under consideration, is refuted by both. The experiment has been made, whether giving the elective franchise is tantamount to giving them seats in Parliament; they had that elective right near half a century after the revolution;—they had it in the Parliament that sat in the reign of King William;—they had it in the Parliament that sat in the reign of Anne; they had it in the Parliament that sat in the reign of George the 1st. and they had it in the Parliament that sat in the reign of George the 2d. The first Parliament that sat in Ireland since the Revolution in which the Roman Catholics had not the elective franchise, was the first of the present reign: it follows from this example, that the elective franchise, so far from securing to them the right of sitting in Parliament, was not able to secure the right of voting at elections.

tions ;—they lost that right in the commencement of George the II^d.’s reign, after having possessed it for 37 years since the Revolution ; from hence I conclude that you are more alarmed than you need be, and that if the time was ripe for it, you might so qualify that franchise, or, in the words of your own act of Parliament, give them a share in the blessings of the Constitution with much safety, and much strength to the Protestant Ascendancy. If the principle I uphold is erroneous, it is the error and the precise expression in the preamble in your act of Parliament.

A Right Hon. Gentleman has said, that a man is not therefore a slave, because he has not a vote : It is true a man who has no property to be taxed is not a slave, when property is taxed without his consent, because he is not taxed ; but the Catholic who has property is taxed, and then the argument of the member is that a Catholic, though taxed without his consent, and a Protestant not taxed at all, are alike ;—that the Catholic body are in the situation of that Protestant who has neither lands, tenements, or hereditaments, therefore free.

The Revolution has been much insisted on, and much misunderstood. Gentlemen speak of the Revolution as the measure and limit of our liberty.—The Revolution in Ireland was followed by two events, the loss of trade and the loss of freedom to the Protestant ; and the cause of such losses was our religious animosity. It was not attended by the loss of the elective franchise to the Papist. If, then, the Revolution is the common measure of the condition of both sects, two extraordinary results would follow, that the Protestants should not recover their trade or freedom, and that the Catholics should not lose their franchise ;

chise; but the virtue of the Revolution in Ireland was its principles, which were for a century checked in this country, but which did at last exert themselves, and inspire you to re-establish your liberty, and must at last prompt you to communicate a share of that liberty to the rest of the Irish. The Revolution in Ireland, properly understood, is a great and salient principle of freedom; as misunderstood, it is a measure and entail of bondage.

The part of the subject which I shall now press upon you, is the final and eternal doom to which some gentlemen propose to condemn the Catholic. Some have said they must never get the elective franchise. What never be free? 3,000,000 of your people condemned by their fellow subjects to an everlasting slavery in all changes of time, decay of prejudice, increase of knowledge, the fall of papal power, and the establishment of philosophic and moral ascendancy in its place!—Never be free!—Do you mean to tell the Roman Catholic, it is in vain you take oaths and declarations of allegiance; it would be in vain even to renounce the spiritual power of the Pope, and become like any other dissenter—it will make no difference as to your emancipation. Go to France; Go to America; carry your property, industry, manufactures and family to a land of liberty; this is a sentence which requires the power of a God and the malignity of a dæmon;—you are not competent to pronounce it;—believe me, you may as well plant your foot on the earth, and hope by that resistance to stop the diurnal revolution which advances you to that morning sun, which is to shine alike on the Protestant and the Catholic, as you can hope to arrest the progress of that other light, Reason and Justice, which approach

approach to liberate the Catholic, and liberalize the Protestant. Even now the question is on its way, and making its destined and irresistible progress, which you, with all your authority, will have no power to resist; no more than any other great truth, or any great ordinance of nature, or any law of motion which mankind is free to contemplate, but cannot resist; there is a justice linked to their cause, and a truth that sets off their application.

This debate is a proof of it, scarce had gentlemen declared the franchise never should be given, when they acknowledge it must, but in such time as the Catholic mind is prepared; then we are agreed, that Catholics may with safety to the Protestant Ascendancy, be admitted to the right of voting, provided they are enlightened Catholics, and we must of course, by that argument, admit that such Catholics as are now enlightened, may with safety be now admitted; thus in the course of two nights debate, have the two great arguments for their exclusion been surrendered, danger to the Revolution and to the Ascendancy. It is their ignorance, you now say, not their religion which is dangerous, and thus the question becomes a point of moral capacity, not of religion; whether for instance, Catholics of property are in as fit a state of moral capacity to exercise the right of franchise as a 40 shilling freeholder—You have in the course of this night, defended the Protestant Ascendancy, a Protestant King, a Protestant church, a Protestant Parliament, and a Protestant constituency; here you draw your lines of circumvallation, but you demolish this work, and defy this definition, when you allow that hereafter that constituency, when well instructed, may in some proportion be Catholic.

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The Protestant Ascendancy, then, by your admission, don't require a constituency purely Protestant, but compounded of such men as are civilized substantial freeholders: By the Constitution of this country, land should be represented: the land therefore, should be in the hands of a Protestant constituency. If, then, your definition is true in its principle, it must be extended, and you must say, that the Protestant Ascendancy requires that all the land, as well as all the votes, should be Protestant; and this principle will extend to commerce; and then you must say, that the Protestant Ascendancy requires that all the commerce, as well as all the land and all the votes, should be in the possession of Protestants, until at last you sweep the Catholics off the face of the island.—The idea of this definition would rest the Protestant state on a sect, not on a people; that is, it would make its base narrow, in order to make its head secure;—a small foundation and a great superstructure; Protestant monopoly, distinct from, and fatal to, Protestant Ascendancy. You have already permitted the Catholics to purchase land; they are now the numbers, and by your law, they may be a considerable portion of landed property; your prudence then would provide, that this union of numbers and landed property, shall have no interest in Protestant freedom, and this you do for the better assuring and preserving the same; you see we adopt names which we do not understand, and set them against things which we might understand. We set up the name of Protestant Ascendancy against Protestant power, just as we set up the name Revolution against Protestant freedom. The Church has been forgotten no more than the State, and it has been insisted on, that if the Catholics get

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freedom, they will exercise it to substitute the establishment of their religion in the place of ours. The example of the Presbyterians refutes that argument; they are the majority of Protestants, and they have not destroyed our Church establishment. But the argument in its principles is erroneous. Men cannot be free without suffrage, but men may be free without Church establishment; and therefore they may be satisfied with the possession of the one; and not dissatisfied without the possession of the other. I have given my sentiments on this the other night. I see no reason to change them. I am not for precipitating any measure, but loving you as I do, I have thought it necessary to lay before you the whole of your situation, and to resist that tide of error which carries away all recollection, I have given my reasons; hereafter your mind will open; and we shall unite Protestant power with Catholic freedom.

Mr. Marcus Beresford endeavoured by some syllogistical arguments to prove that the House of Commons was a representation not of the people, but of the property of the country, and that under this view the Roman Catholics were as effectually represented as if they had voted for Members of Parliament. He said much to shew the number of electors in Ireland was much greater than those of England, extent of territory considered.

Mr. George Ponsonby. Of all the votes I ever have given, or ever shall give in this House, that of this night will be the most painful, because in it I am obliged to differ in opinion from the man whom in this House I respect the most.

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The firm conviction which I have that the advantage of Ireland is in his mind superior to every other consideration, makes any difference from him peculiarly painful.

I could wish the Right Hon. Gentleman had not made this motion; I know his sentiments are pure—but I cannot see why it was necessary to have a division. If the motion had come from any one of the other side of the House, I should have supposed it was made for the purpose of destroying the good effect of what we did last Saturday. I have this night heard language in this House such as I never heard in this House before: we have been asked where are the names of the nobility and gentry of the Roman Catholics? Sir, we have heard much of aristocracy; it is a favourite theme to accuse this side of the House as an aristocracy; but I never heard such aristocratical language, as if petitioning Parliament was not equally the birth-right of the proudest peer and the meanest peasant of the land.

This petition seeks for the elective franchise for the Roman Catholics; and it has been said in this House that this franchise shall neither now or ever be granted them. No man despises the prejudices of Popery more than I do, and I confess I do not think that it would be wise to extend them the elective franchise at this time; but I am far from saying, and I should be very sorry to suppose, that a time would never come when this measure would be both safe and advantageous to this country.

I have not divulged my opinion upon this subject to many; I have not communicated with any of the Roman Catholics, and I have disclosed my sentiments to a very few Protestants. I know

know if any one of the objects of this Bill had been proposed from this side of the House, it would have been said that we were a factious party of desperate men, who, not being able by our own natural strength to force ourselves into power, were determined at any rate, and by the aid of any kind of men whatever, to carry our measures.

I did think that the measure should have proceeded from a Prince of the house of Brunswick and his ministers; but never did I suppose that it could be introduced into this House without consulting those most immediately affected—the Protestant gentlemen of Ireland. If it was intended to reconcile the Catholics to the Protestants it ought to have been given from the Protestants as favour to the Catholics, proceeding from the kindness of the Protestants and accepted by the gratitude of the Catholics.

An Hon. Member has talked much of the factions of the times, of seditious pamphlets, and of inflammatory hand-bills: If any individual has violated the public peace by such practices, if our Constitution has been traduced and our establishments decried, why does the hon. gentleman content himself with scolding here? Why does he not drag the offender before the insulted Majesty of the laws? Why does he not prosecute him in the court of King's Bench, and exact the penalty of his Transgressions? If any have suffered by these publications so alarming in their tendency, it is this side of the House; administration has not been injured, we only have experienced their ill effects, for the audacious spirit of these books has driven men of sense and weight into the arms of government, who would otherwise have opposed and reprobated their corruption.

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I do not think that rejecting this petition will be an insult to the Roman Catholics.—I would insult no man, but I think it is necessary for Parliament to grant, and to define the extent of their concessions.

Ireland, last of all nations of Europe, felt the hand of civilization—there are parts of Ireland, of which we can hardly say that they are yet completely civilized; shall we impart the British Constitution to men who cannot speak the British language?—shall we offer the privileges of perfect society to those who are hardly in the first stage of civilization. It is true part of the Roman Catholics, and a large part, must be exempted from this charge, but you must grant to all or to none.

We should wait till our laws have operated, to see their effects; to interest the Catholics in the settlement of property, we have given them the power of purchasing lands: by allowing them education we will enlighten them, and by intermarriage, we will encrease our connection and render our interest the same; by admission to the Bar their minds will become liberal; but because we give them these privileges we must not therefore give what should follow their effect; for all those causes should operate before we give them the elective franchise, the ultimatum of power.

Parties are necessary in a free state; but religion when brought into party, has always been destructive; it has been too long so in Ireland; I wish we could forget its consequences, and I hope the time will come, though I may not live to see it, when there will be no difference amidst Irishmen, but that of good and bad citizen.

The House divided on the rejection of the petition,

Ayes for rejecting	208
Noes	23
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Majority	185
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Tellers for the ayes, Right Hon. D. Latouche,
Right Hon. George Ogle.

For the noes, Mr. Forbes and Col. Hutchinson.

Right Honourable Mr. Latouche then moved, that the petition from the Society of the United Irishmen of Belfast, should be also rejected. The question was put, and the petition rejected with two or three negatives.

The House adjourned.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 22.

Mr. Paul moved, “ That it should be an instruction. to the Committee on the Popery bill
“ to receive a clause, to repeal so much of the
“ 12th of George I. and 23 of George II. as make
“ the marrying of a Protestant to a Papist by
“ Popish Priest, felony of death, without benefit of
“ clergy, and inflict a penalty upon the persons
“ married and present at the marriage, in case of
“ not

“ not discovering it within three years.” He said these were the most disgraceful and sanguinary laws in the Popish code.

The Right Hon. Attorney General said he would not object to a law for lessening the punishment in those cases ; but he would not consent to have such marriages legalized.—It had been the wish of those who had assisted the Hon. Baronet in framing the bill, (of which number he had the honor to be one) to frame it so as to give offence to no person whatever ; but he did not think that the clergy of this kingdom would ever agree to permitting Popish Priests to marry Protestants and Papists.

Mr. Paul said, he thought it disgraceful to humanity that a Priest, who might innocently and ignorantly marry two persons together, one of whom without his knowledge was a Protestant, should incur the dreadful penalty of death without benefit of clergy ; in great maritime towns, especially where there was a continual influx of people, it would be impossible for him to know the religions of all those persons who were married by him.

Right Hon. John Beresford said, that in a business of this great importance, every step should be deliberately considered ; nothing should be admitted into this bill without full and fair notice ;—the bill itself has been slowly brought through the House, that it might be maturely and entirely understood ; it has been brought in a fortnight after leave was given ; a fortnight had intervened between each reading, and it had been committed for a distant day ; but now, just as the

the House were going into the Committee, new clauses were introduced when they had no time to consider them, or know what they were. As to the particular law which the gentleman wished to repeal, he did not see the necessity for repealing it: In large towns, there were always Protestant Clergymen to be found, and it would be a very heavy crime, even in them, to marry any person without a licence, especially persons unknown: if this law were repealed, Protestant Clergymen would alone be punished, while Popish priests would pass with impunity.

Sir Hercules Langrishe. The penalty in this case is certainly disproportioned to the crime; there is already a paragraph in this bill enacting "that there shall be no penalty on Protestant Clergymen marrying Protestants to Roman Catholics." and three or four words at the end of that clause will do as well as the clause of the Hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Johnson said, he would not only oppose this but any other extension which should be offered to the present bill; upon this ground that nothing should be admitted into it, which should not have been properly considered. Notwithstanding all the time that the bill had been before the House, he did not think that it was yet fully considered; if gentlemen design farther benefits to the Roman Catholics, let them move another distinct bill for the purpose. In a great national question like this, too much time could not be taken, on a much less important subject in another country, (the Law of Libels) Parliament had postponed the bill for consideration from one session to another, that so interesting and momentous a law might be thoroughly understood and investigated.

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Mr. Paul said he had been impelled by humanity merely to introduce the clause; he had been struck with horror on reading the law in the statute books; but as his motion had met with so much opposition, he would beg leave of the House to withdraw it.

Mr. Maxwell said, he would propose in the Committee on the Popery Bill, some amendments which he would then read to the House, in order not to offer any thing by surprise: he hoped he would not from them be supposed an enemy to the bill; but he deemed them necessary to secure the Protestant ascendancy; and he perfectly agreed with those gentlemen who thought the House should “give with generosity, and withhold with firmness.”—He would introduce a clause into the oath which the bill required the Roman Catholics to take—an oath which had been long the only barrier between them and the Protestants, which if they disregarded, they might long since have forced their way into that House—but to which they had shewn a most religious observance. His attention was to add to the oath these words:—“*And I do swear that I will not consent to any project to overturn the Protestant Ascendancy.*”—This he thought would not detract from the object of the bill, for he supposed no Roman Catholic would refuse this oath.

Another amendment he would propose to the oath, in imitation of the English oath, in order to remove the difficulty of ascertaining who were Roman Catholics—it would be thus:—“*I, A. B. do swear, that I am of the Roman Religion.*”

A third amendment would be also copied from the English: it was this—to prevent Popish school-

masters educating the children of Protestant parents.

The House then resolved into Committee on the bill to relieve his Majesty's subjects professing the Roman Catholic religion.

Lord Delvin in the Chair.

Mr. Maxwell proposed his first amendment.

Mr. Johnson wished the Hon. Gentleman would define what he meant by the Protestant Ascendancy; the first time he had heard the expression was from the mouth of a gentleman of a vigorous imagination, who emphatically stamped a meaning on the words, which the House felt strongly at the moment. But he did not know how, under this clause, an indictment could be framed, or a man convicted under the general crime of an attempt to overturn the Protestant Ascendancy.

Mr. Maxwell said, if the words conveyed a meaning to the person taking the oath it was sufficient; the oath only related to religious tenets which were equally vague and indefinite; it was restricted to no Court of Law, it was only registered in *foro conscientiæ*; but as the House seemed disinclined to the amendment, he would withdraw it.

Sir Hercules Langrishe moved a clause to repeal the law obliging Solicitors and Attornies to educate their children Protestants. It was absurd to allow Roman Catholics to become of this profession,

profession, and yet oblige them to educate their children in a different religion.

The clause was agreed to.

Sir Hercules Langrishe said, that the liberality of the gentlemen of the law, in not opposing the entry of Roman Catholics into that profession, was so strong an argument in favour of extending the facility of admission to the Bar, that he would move the following clause :

“ That every person professing the Roman Catholic Religion, who had before the 1st day of January, 1792, entered his name at an English Inn of Court as a Student, shall be allowed to enter his name in the Society of King’s Inns of Ireland, as of the date of his entry in such English Inn of Court, and the Treasurer of the said Society is hereby empowered and authorised to make such special entry.”

This clause was agreed to.

Mr. G. Ponsonby observed, that by the clause just passed, the Roman Catholics would be put in a more advantageous situation than many Protestant young gentlemen, who had performed all the requisites necessary to going to the Bar, save only entering their names at the King’s Inns in Ireland ; he hoped they would be indulged in the same manner it was intended the Catholics should be.

The Prime Serjeant and Attorney General concurred ; and an amendment was made by which
 “ such Protestant students of the law as have entered their names in any one of the Inns of Court in England, previous to the 1st January,

“ 1792,

“ 1792, shall be enabled to enter their names in
 “ Ireland, *as of the same date* as their entry in
 “ England.”

The clause being read which went to legalize the intermarriages of Protestants with Roman Catholics.

Mr. Bagwell objected to it, as having a tendency more powerful than any other cause whatever, of making converts to the Roman Catholic religion.

Sir Hercules Langrishe said, the clause went no further than to restore a liberty which had existed even in the most rigorous times, and to re-establish that which was really and truly a relaxation, not more in favour of Roman Catholics, than of Protestants—and such as must have a tendency, to create union and intercourse amongst every class of subjects.

The act of the 9th of William the III. went no further than to prevent Roman Catholics from becoming heirs, executors, administrators or guardians to any person—but it did not go so far as to disallow their marriage with Protestants.—It went indeed so far as to render their children *beggars*—but it did not proceed to stigmatize them with the disgrace of *bastardy*.—It remained for the persecuting period of 1746, to enact a law which *ipso facto* annulled thence forward every marriage between Protestant and Papist—an act of eternal separation to the people of the respective religions, which had now for just forty six years disgraced our Statute books;—fortunately for the cause of justice and human nature, the persecuting zeal which dictated this law defeated
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its own object ; for so loosely worded was the act, that it was only by the transposition of a single *comma*, that the spirit of this act was averted from the cruel purpose of preventing many a virtuous and amiable wife, to guard the reputation of her own chastity, or the legitimacy of her own children—He was happy however to know that gentlemen of the profession of the law in modern and moderate times, had too much liberality, not to use every opportunity of construing away those abominable Statutes.

He trusted the liberal concessions of the present hour, would not be marred by the adoption of a proposition, which would mark with individiousness a bill, having for its object conciliation and mutual happiness ;—and that gentlemen would not, under the pressure of old prejudices, destroy all the advantages which must result to posterity from this most material and interesting clause in the bill ; and which he was confident must tend more than any other—to oblivate all insidious dissention, and unite the regards of all sects of subjects.

Mr. Coote rose to express his love for the Protestants, and his respect for the Roman Catholics.—The oftener he considered the subject of the present bill, the more was he convinced of its importance.—He never could allow, but ever must reject any measure tending to subvert the Protestant ascendancy, or to incroach upon our constitution, so happily established as it is.

The Hon. Denis Browne said, he firmly thought with the Right Hon. Gentleman, but he could not see how the Protestant ascendancy was to be subverted

subverted, or the happiness of the constitution encroached on by the present clause.

With respect to the apprehensions intimated in the course of debate upon this bill, that it would tend to revive the claims of Catholics for forfeited estates, no man had stronger reasons for such fears than himself, as all the estates of his family were purchased under forfeitures. He was also convinced that the greater number of Roman Catholics who now possessed estates in this country, inherited under similar titles: But he entertained no apprehensions whatever upon the subject.

Mr. G. Ponsonby—the *Hon. Mr. Pery*—and *Sir James Cotter*, were against expunging the clause.

An amendment was proposed to this clause, for removing the disqualification of Protestants, married to Roman Catholic wives, from voting at elections.

Mr. Secretary Hobart said, the Bill introduced by his Hon. Friend (*Sir Hercules Langrishe*) did propose certain objects which had hitherto the good fortune of meeting the concurrence of the House, and the approbation of the country—and he should be sorry now to see any new matter introduced, which should hazard that unanimity so desirable upon a subject of so much importance. He did not wish to leave it in any man's power to say—that the friends of the measure had, by a side wind, done what they did not profess or intend to do.

Mr. Ogle said he would not give his assent to a clause in this Bill, which he could not admit in any election bill. There were other indulgences
given

given by the Bill to which he had his objections:—The Bar, for instance;—for though he should not object to give the Catholics every necessary advantage, with respect to agriculture and trade—he could not consider the profession of a Barrister in the light of trade.—How far it might be wise to extend this profession to Roman Catholics was for the discretion of the House; but for his part he considered a *Protestant Bar* as necessary as a *Protestant Parliament*.

Mr. Grattan thought it extremely impolitic, at the very time that Gentlemen seemed so eager to support the Protestant Ascendancy—to seem anxious for the continuance of a law, tending to lessen the number of Protestant electors.—It was in his mind carrying the idea too far, to suppose female influence, by Catholic wives on Protestant husbands, could injure the Protestant interest upon an election. He thought there was no obstacle so great to the good effects of the present Bill, as that of disfranchising every Protestant elector, for availing himself of the benefits it holds out; it would be in fact encouraging with one hand, and at the same time discouraging with the other. The elective franchise was one of the strongest temporal inducements to conformity; but while the disqualifying principle existed, the inducement could have no operation with respect to the married Catholic, who, if he was inclined to conform, would be disfranchised by the non-conformity of his wife—and thus be encouraged to go back to Popery.

He saw however, it was in vain to debate upon the clause—but he owed to his own consistency the declaration of his sentiments; and however adverse Gentlemen might be to join his opinion,

opinion, he was free to declare, he thought any penalty whatever, annexed to the intermarriage of Protestants with Roman Catholics, injurious to the Protestant Ascendancy. The intermarriage of the victorious people with the vanquished people was a policy as old as Alexander the Great; and certainly must be the best possible mode of securing the interests and the influence of the former. So long as it was the law of this country to prevent the marriage of Protestants with Catholics, those penalties might be right—but now that this law was no longer to exist, and that it became a principle of policy to encourage such intermarriages—to keep up these penalties was absurd and ridiculous.

With respect to management in the moving of this amendment, it might not be advisable to press it, at the risque of losing the Bill altogether—but he would recommend the principle, as a laudable ground for adoption in an election Bill.

Mr. Solicitor General thought it very wrong to hold any thing like a *matrimonial* dispute; for his part he was of opinion that *matrimony* should be one of the *freest trades* in the country—and with this view, he considered it highly absurd, while a law was passed for the encouragement of matrimony between Protestant and Roman Catholic—to continue another law which attached disfranchisement to the very act which it is the wish of Parliament to encourage.

The amendment was rejected—and the clause passed in its original form.

The education clause being read :

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Sir Hercules Langrishe commented with much point, upon the preposterous policy on which the penal laws respecting the education of Catholics must have been founded.—For though all nations, in all ages, were under the impresson of a wish for improvement and education amongst them, yet our Statute Books stood branded with the odium of a law which not only precludes the great body of the people from acquiring any education at home, but subjects any one of them who shall go of himself, or send his child for education into other countries—to disqualification for ever; from suing for any claim in any court of law or equity, from being a guardian, or an executor, or an administrator—or receiving any legacy.—And this is not enough—he is not only subjected to these persecuting penalties by the law of the country, but contrary to all principles of law, his accuser is not obliged to appear to prove his crime,—but the accused must prove his own innocence, or be convicted!

The object of the present Bill was to do away that obnoxious law, and give the Catholic the full power of educating his children every where, or any where he can procure the best education for them;—and in order to render them the more eligible for this purpose, the Bill went also, to repeal so much of the Act of the 17th and 18th of Charles II. as obliges all persons opening schools to take out a license from the Bishop of the diocese;—by which means the Roman Catholics would be enabled to open seminaries for the education of their youth, in every respect agreeable to their own choice.

Mr. Grattan observed, that by the present laws of the College, there were certain oaths
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necessary to be taken, which prevented Roman Catholics from becoming Professors in the learned departments ;—he therefore intimated an intention of bringing forward a bill at some future day—if it should be thought inexpedient to do it by the present Bill.

Mr. George Ponsonby said he had no objection to the present Bill, for what it did, but rather for what it *did not*.

It was defective, in so much as it did not give in its fullest extent the benefit of an University education, both to the Laity and the Clergy of the Roman Catholic religion. He thought if there was any restraint on them in this point, it should be to oblige them to educate their Clergy at home.—And that the youth of both religions should not be educated separately, but together and in the same university. He had in contemplation a motion to bring forward, for this purpose, but not in the present Session.—It might perhaps be advisable to found another College, and annex it as a branch of the present university. It was a plan which would well deserve the attention of Government, and the liberal support of Parliament ;—he threw out the idea now that Gentlemen might turn the subject in their thoughts, and come prepared next session to aid it by their suggestions.

Mr. Graydon was of opinion, the Bill embraced no object more materially important than that of education ; but on this subject it did not go far enough.—For if the Legislature had extended to the Roman Catholics the just and necessary benefits of an home education, it was their duty also to provide as fully as possible for that education,

tion, under proper and well regulated establishments, and to prevent the necessity of their resorting to other foreign universities; for he was fully convinced if we did not allow the Roman Catholics in this country education in our University, the Bill could never effect its most desirable objects. With respect to the clergy of both persuasions, he did not think it would be advisable to educate them together, lest it might tend to re-excite those theological controversies, and polemical disputations which had already done so much mischief in this country, and fomented so much the rancour of sectaries against each other,

Mr. G. Ponsonby replied, that he believed the spirit of religious controversy on the subject of *mysteries*, was now totally exploded;—and mankind were content to read and admire the great truths of the Gospel in the majestic simplicity of their own language, unperplexed by the mystical jargon of school theology.—But if ever a Roman Catholic and a Protestant Divine in this country should attempt to amuse themselves by reviving any public controversy—about theological mysteries, and that he should have the honour of a seat in Parliament, he would find a way to silence them.—Such subjects were now fallen into the utter contempt they deserved—and it would be the fault of the Legislature, if ever they suffered the public mind to be agitated by any such contemptible nonsense.

Doctor Browne (College) thought the education of youth as much an object of Legislation, as any other purpose whatever;—because by it were to be inculcated the principles that govern men's
 opinions

opinions and conduct through life.—With respect to what had been urged by his Hon. Friend (Mr. Ponsonby) touching the education of Protestant and Catholic youth together, there were he knew different opinions in the university :—The Junior Fellows were friends to the measure ; but the Seniors were of a different opinion. He wished however, when Gentlemen were carving the College, and making new ones, and disposing of revenues as they pleased, they would condescend to recollect, that it was part of the charter of the College, that no new seminary for education should be erected without their consent, unless by Royal Licence, which therefore at least would be necessary, to preserve their chartered rights. He thought also, it would not be paying them much compliment, to advise with them a little upon such an occasion, or to suppose they might be in some measure judges, as to the expediency of ingrafting a different College upon their stock, or the expediency or practicability of admitting Roman Catholics into the present ; he should not however be surprized to see plans formed, without thinking of them at all, (in the same manner as they were treated with respect to the famous Board of Education) from the contempt and neglect which they had experienced from Government for thirty years past, a treatment totally different from what they had experienced in former reigns, which tended to discourage literature, emulation, and exertion, and which was one of the curses attending the affronted, and degraded state of Ireland—a treatment they did not deserve, since they would not yield in *real* learning to any seminary.—The nation of Ireland, ought to foster its own University, and reprobate any Government which did not do so.

Mr.

Mr. G. Ponsonby rose to explain, and to assure his Hon. and Learned Friend that no disrespect or inattention whatever was intended to the University by either himself or his Right Hon. Friend, (*Mr. Grattan*) nor did he believe the Government of the country would adopt any measure of the nature proposed, without previously consulting the University.

The clause moved by *Mr. Grattan*, for enabling the Roman Catholics to become Professors of Anatomy, Botany, and Chemistry, and referred by the House to the Committee, being now read, it was warmly opposed by

Doctor Duigenán who explained that the professorships in these sciences in Trinity College were supported on a fund, specifically appropriated to the purpose, by the will of Alderman Sir Patrick Dunn—and he therefore hoped Parliament would not so far infringe the intention of the donor, or the privileges of the University, as to throw open to Roman Catholics, benefits that were specifically appropriated by the testator to Protestant professors, long before any such measure as the Bill now before the House, was thought of. He expressed his apprehensions, that if once the College dignities were thrown open to Roman Catholics—the Protestant influence there would in time be subverted by Popery. After a short and desultory debate, or rather conversation—the clause was rejected on the consideration of the present fund for supporting the Professorships being a private donation, and subject to the conditions specified by the donor.

The Committee having finished the bill, Lord Delvin acquainted the House that they were ready to report.

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The report was ordered to be received to-morrow.

Mr. Staples rose to congratulate the House and the Nation upon the firmness that the Representative Body had shewn upon the refusing the Roman Catholics every thing injurious to the Protestant Ascendancy, and their liberality at the same time, in granting them every possible advantage, consistent with that Ascendancy; he desired most particularly to give his hearty thanks to his Right Hon. friend, high in office, (*Mr. Hobart*) for the steady attention he had upon this occasion shewn to the welfare of the country.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 24.

The Catholic Bill was read a third time.—On putting the question that the bill now pass,

Sir Hercules Langrishe said, Mr. Speaker, I cannot take leave of this subject without congratulating you and the country on the spirit and liberality that has attended this bill in its progress, and finally brought it to so desirable a conclusion.

I consider this bill, thus passed, as a new covenant—a new charter of amity and intercourse amongst us; and I feel a pride I cannot express, in observing that what you have granted to your Catholic brethren, you have granted with cordiality and good will—with a confident heart, an unreluctant hand, and an unanimous voice.—Whilst your constitutional pride justly resented the rashness of a few, your justice distinguished the meritorious conduct of the many; and in the intemperance
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of the moment you did not forget the unimpeachable demeanor of an hundred years.

Whatever you have given, or whatever you have withheld, you have at least given them the most decisive testimony of your sympathy and affection, by inviting them to join with you as one people in alliance and kindredship—in the nearest and dearest of human connexions. But I will tell my Catholic friends, (and I am not afraid in whatever I may say, or whatever I may do, or whatever I may forbear to do for them, that they will doubt the sincerity of my ancient and inflexible attachment) I will tell them, that notwithstanding the infatuated industry that was at work to provoke the pride, to inflame the passions, and revive the prejudices that have so long kept us asunder—notwithstanding these rash endeavours, the House of Commons yet retained the temper of benignity, and the concessions they made were in themselves important.

When you cast off your narrow prejudices and invidious distinctions, by inviting them to intermarriage—when you gave them the free choice and exercise of education—when you gave them the participation in the most honourable, the most lucrative, and the most comprehensive profession in the country—you made them concessions of great magnitude—you conferred favours for which their gratitude is due—and I will be answerable for it, they will pay the debt.

I will tell the Roman Catholics (and I think they will be inclined to place confidence in what I say) that so long as they persevere (which I believe they always will) in their attachment to the King and Constitution, submission to the supreme and settled authority of the state, and obedience to the laws, they will find, as they now do, the
Government

Government of the country treat them as friends, and the Parliament embrace them as brothers; and that so long as the present Constitution lasts, or there be any settled government at all, such principles and such conduct must be their best, and ought to be their only advocates.

The most powerful adversaries we, who have laboured with sincerity and solicitude to serve them, had to encounter, were the rash and mischievous publications which affected to plead their cause. And were it not for the wise and timely interposition of the great and respectable body of the Roman Catholics, to whom I have often alluded, and of whom every gentleman has spoken in terms of the highest respect, we should neither have been justified in our undertaking, nor successful in our conclusion. However, I have now the final gratification to see this high testimony of Parliament in favour of the Catholics of Ireland, and I am satisfied.

Mr. Grattan rose to say, that the Right Hon. Bart. had certainly no need to be concerned at the circumstance of the sentiments being made public—for his sentiments, whether recorded in letters or otherwise, were such as must ever do him honour.

The bill then passed and was carried to the Lords by Sir Hercules and a great number of the Members.

HOUSE OF LORDS.

THURSDAY, MARCH 1.

THE bill having been, on previous days, read the first and second time without debate; and committed for this day, and the order of the day to this purpose being read—their lordships accordingly resolved into committee.

Lord Viscount Ranelagh in the Chair.

The Bishop of Killala—(Dr. Law) rose, to express his satisfaction at the spirit, lenience and liberality which in this day seemed to actuate the legislature towards the Roman Catholics of Ireland—The concessions granted by the present bill, he did not consider so much in the light of acts of *indulgence* as of *just debt*, as well to the patience and long suffering of that oppressed people—as to their loyalty and good conduct.—Let the sun of kindness now shine on them, and their deservings will proportionably increase.

Former Parliaments had treated this class of subjects with a rigour similar to that adopted for the taming of wild beasts, by never allowing

them rest—and continually inflicting punishments on them ; but he now conjured the house to adopt a wiser policy by treating them with mildness and lenity. The storms of adversity heretofore directed against them, had instead of dividing, been found to connect them more closely—but the more liberal and christian policy of modern times was justified by its good effects in uniting and attaching their affections to the state—instead of creating in their minds abhorrence and disaffection towards that system which heaped restriction upon restriction, and persecution upon persecution. The Reverend prelate proposed now to enter into an historical view of those circumstances which were called the crimes of Roman Catholics, which gradually gave rise to the penal code, with a view to pass some strictures on the severity and impolicy of the code itself ; a code which gave to the unprincipled son his father's estate, and reduced the Catholic Gentleman of property to a beggar, but he was interrupted by the Lord Chancellor, who, speaking to order—said it was not orderly for any noble Lord to go at large into the principle of the bill in its present stage—under the consideration of the Committee. The bill had been read, a first and a second time, without any remark whatever from the noble prelate—who if he wished to speak at large to its principle, should have done so at either of those two opportunities.

The question now before the committee was merely whether they would or would not agree to the clause just read—and therefore, he could not see how the going into strictures upon laws that had been repealed was relevant to the subject.

Lord Fortarlington thought the noble prelate perfectly in order, in speaking his sentiments on a subject of so much importance.

Lord Donoughmore—thought the principle of the bill was fairly and fully before the committee; and it was perfectly in his idea relevant to that principle and that question to recur to those laws a part of which the bill was intended to repeal. He therefore thought the noble prelate perfectly in order. He trusted the question would not now be hurried; a subject of so much importance, he hoped would be discussed with that calmness and respect due to that great and respectable body of men who formed the object of the bill.

The Archbishop of Cashel supported the Chancellor's opinion, that the Reverend prelate was not orderly in speaking at large to the principles of the bill in its present stage—The house had laid down orders to regulate its proceedings, and it was always found when it departed from those rules, disorder and confusion were the consequence. He called upon the chairman to declare what was order?

The Duke of Leinster said, the first clause (it was that for admitting Catholics to the profession of the law) was the principal one in the bill, and as including the most material object—its discussion could not now be irrelevant.

The noble chairman gave it as his opinion, that the Rev. Prelate was out of order.

The Bishop of Killala hoped the House would hear what he had to urge on behalf of the Roman Catholics—for how could the House know what it should grant until it should appear what was necessary to be granted.

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The Marquis of Waterford supported the opinion and authority of the noble chairman. He was as ready to hear discussions as any noble Lord, but he could not see the necessity of hearing discussions relative to laws that were long since repealed.

The Bishop of Killala at length acceded to the sense of the chair; and the clause was unanimously agreed to.

When that clause of the bill was read, which goes to allow the intermarriage of Protestants with Roman Catholics.

The Bishop of Limerick feared, great inconvenience attending this act; the Parliament should reflect on the consequence of passing it; it would certainly tend, not only to conjugal disagreement, but would operate to the injury of the Protestant establishment, as the children must be educated Papists.

The Archbishop of Cashell, said, though he should not vote against the reception of the bill, because he would not oppose his voice to any measure which seemed to be adopted with the general sense of the legislature, yet he had some objections to parts of the bill, on which, though he should yield his vote, yet he would not sacrifice his opinion. To the present clause in particular, he had very strong objections. The measure was alledged to be grounded on the precedent of a British act of Parliament, but he would contend no such law existed in England. It was a measure in his mind likely to be productive of the most disagreeable consequences. He knew the Roman Catholics well, having lived long in the country amongst them, and he never had heard of an intermarriage of this kind that was not attended with discontent and

and disagreement between the parties, and that did not end in either both going to mass, or educating their children in the popish religion—and thus it must tend to encourage the growth of popery. He scrupled not to say, that so far as Roman Catholics were educated, he cared not if Protestant and Catholic were every day united—but as by far the majority of them were ignorant and uneducated, he was concerned for the consequences of the proposed clause. He did not, he said, speak from hearsay, but from intimate knowledge, and he had no scruple to declare his own opinion that he thought the Roman Catholic religion, a religion for knaves and fools; for what was to be thought of a religion whose pastors told us that the Bible, which contained those truths on which our whole faith was founded, was not the proper authority for our direction and appeal? This reasoning he considered perfectly apposite; and he felt it his duty to declare his sentiments; but he would not vote against a bill which passed the unanimous sense of another house, where he was sure there was as much difference of sentiment on its principles as there possibly could be in that assembly.

The noble prelate, on that part of the clause which forbids dissenting clergymen from celebrating marriages between Protestants and Roman Catholics—proposed an amendment, by specifically including Popish Clergymen under the same disability.—This he did to prevent the evils arising from clandestine marriages between Protestants and Catholics as well as to facilitate the ascertainment of legality of such marriages, and the legitimacy of children springing therefrom;—Points which would always be easily decided by the restrictions under which marriages were guarded in the established church—first by publishing banns or taking out licence, and then

by registering such marriages—but which could not be so readily ascertained, when the Protestant clergymen published the banns—and left the performance of the ceremony to the dissenter or the papist.—He had no objection however to those clergymen performing the marriage ceremony between parties in their own respective religions. And in fact he said his amendment enacted nothing new that was not before in the bill, but merely went to obviate all possible doubts.

Lord Donoughmore imagined the very cause which the Right Rev. Prelate had assigned for introducing the amendment, to be the strongest argument against agreeing to it—"That it enacted nothing but what was contained in the bill."

The Bishop of Cork said, he must oppose any alteration; the public attendance was directed to the fate of this bill; he confessed himself anxious that it should meet with no difficulty in this House, that it should pass through it in the state it was presented.

The question was then put on the amendment; and the House divided; the Contents to the right of the Chair, where there appeared a very considerable majority.—The Non-contents declined counting the numbers, and the amendment was received.

On the reading of that clause which goes to permit Roman Catholics to keep schools without the necessity of applying to the bishop of the diocese for a license.

Lord Aldborough rose to propose an amendment, placing the Roman Catholic in this instance on a footing

footing similar with the Protestant—as he considered the former in this instance placed by this clause on a footing of superiority to the latter.

The Lord Chancellor considered the *levity* of this objection as not interesting for a moment to serious notice—the original motive for enacting the law which this clause went to repeal, was a view to the extirpation of the Popish religion out of this country, by preventing persons of that persuasion from taking any share in the education of youth. Modern policy, however, had changed this purpose, and by extending toleration to the Roman Catholic faith, the exercise of that religion, some few public ceremonies only excepted, was not merely tolerated, but now actually under the protection of the laws. And notwithstanding there was no instance of late years of a bishop in any diocese refusing a licence to a Roman Catholic schoolmaster, yet, it was considered a grievance somewhat painful to their feelings, from which *exemption* was, he understood, an object much at heart with the Roman Catholics. Therefore as it was the purpose of the legislature to grant every indulgence to the Roman Catholics, not absolutely inconsistent with Protestant safety, and as further restriction in this point could amount to no more than a mere useless matter of form—he wished the noble Lord might not urge his motion, as no injury could possibly arise from the exemption it was calculated to restrict.—His Lordship said he had read in an English print of a recent date, that an action had been brought in the Court of King's bench in England against a Papist who had, without license, kept a school, and that it was treated with coldness by the Court, and for some informality the Plaintiff was non-suited.

Lord

Lord Aldborough assented to withdraw his motion.

The bill being read through, was agreed to with the one amendment *nemine dissente*.

Lord Ranelagh left the chair and the Chancellor, having taken the Woolfack, the noble chairman presented the report of the committee which was agreed to by the House.

On the question being put, that the bill be read a third time to-morrow,

Lord Donoughmore rose to express his wish that a measure of so much importance to this country, and which has passed another House of Parliament with such unanimity and eclat, might not finally quit that assembly without a full declaration of sentiments upon its nature and tendency. He therefore hoped that on whatever day the bill should be read a third time, the House might be previously summoned, in order that the bill might go forth with the fullest discussion and fullest detection of every noble Lord in the House.

The Archbishop of Cashell said, a noble Prelate who had been precluded in the committee from delivering his sentiments at large on the bill was now at liberty to enter into the discussion on the question for the third reading.

Lord Enniskillen hoped there would be no discussion on the subject, but that the bill would be suffered to pass the House in that quietness and unanimity in which every noble lord in the house seemed disposed to regard it. But if discussions were to be instituted for the purpose of tearing open

open those wounds which were long healed, and throwing condemnation on *ancestry*—he could assure noble lords who were friends to such a purpose the discussion would not turn out the most pleasing to them; he was as much disposed as any man to confer favours on the Roman Catholic but he would not tacitly hear reflections cast upon his ancestors—If the present time did not require the continuance of laws passed by them, it did not follow that those laws were not in their days wise and necessary—If any attacks were made on the wisdom and justice of ancestry on this account, he would move their Lordships to a resolution which would convince the country there was a Protestant House of Lords as well as a Protestant House of Commons.

The Lord Chancellor submitted to noble Lords that it was not the wisest policy to institute discussions which could tend to no good purpose. The sense of the legislature was decidedly in favour of the bill. If he was to credit the public prints, it had passed another house unanimously. If it was the general sense of their Lordships that discussions should take place, he should acquiesce, by speaking his own mind; he thought the unanimity in which it had already passed this House in every stage, must be considered by the Catholics a sufficient proof of the affectionate regards of the Assembly—and therefore, he for one as a friend of the bill, could not see the use or necessity of exciting a diversity of sentiments on the occasion.

The Earl of Aldborough said, if any discussion was introduced derogatory to the honour of our ancestors, he would enter fully into a refutation.

The Duke of Leinster thought the evident unanimity of the House on the bill in every stage must go forth and be considered as a testimony of the warmth and affection of the legislature towards the Roman Catholics. He was therefore one of those who thought discussions unnecessary and tending to excite irritable sentiments. He loved the Roman Catholics as good and loyal subjects. He knew many men among them of high talents understanding and sound judgment; and he had the good fortune to have a tenantry of that persuasion—as good, honest, loyal and industrious subjects as any existing in his majesty's dominions. He was convinced the Roman Catholic body must see with satisfaction the unanimous sentiments of Parliament in their favour. He acknowledged himself amongst the number of those who disapproved of many of their declaratory proceedings—and he trusted, they would henceforward look up to the legislature with loyalty and peaceable demeanour—as the best modes of attaining those further indulgences which he trusted their good conduct would one day certainly induce.

Lord Donoughmore, professing himself as he really was—a friend to the Roman Catholics, trusted he would be one of the last men suspected of a capability of wishing to promote invidious discussion.—He could assure the Noble Lord on the Woolsack, that he was not more desirous of making speeches than his Lordship was of hearing them.—He nevertheless thought the Bill in every stage of it should be attended by the House in a manner suited to its magnitude and importance.—He was a friend and advocate of the Roman Catholics, and for one would have been for going much farther in their indulgence than the bill,
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he supported the bill, not for the privileges, only which it conferred, but for the principle which it established, *a growing principle of legitimate claim on the one hand, and liberal concession on the other*; but he confessed he should be disposed to go much greater lengths for the relief of the Catholics; that the King had no subjects more loyal, or the State any citizens more to be relied upon. he thought them as good subjects and as trusty as Protestants, Dissenters, or any other class of men, and he certainly wished to enregister his sentiments in the fullest manner on the third reading of the bill.—If however it was the wish of the noble Lord that the bill should pass as most others did, in the silent attendance of six or seven Peers, he should not press his motion for summoning the House.—If on the contrary his Lordship had no objection to a full attendance, he should then press his motion.

The Chancellor acquiesced, and Lord Donoughmore's motion for summoning the House for to-morrow was received, and the Bill ordered for the third reading on next day.

The House adjourned to Saturday.

SATURDAY, MARCH 1.

The attendance of this day was much greater than at any other meeting since the opening of the session.

After some cursory business the order of the day was read, that the bill from the Commons

“ To

“ To relieve his Majesty’s subjects in Ireland professing the Roman Catholic religion, from certain restrictions under which they now labour,” be read a third time.

The Bill was accordingly read a third time, and on the Lord Chancellor putting the question that the same be passed,

Lord Donoughmore. I rise to release the House, from the apprehension of debate.—It is not my wish to force a discussion which your Lordships appear so much to *deprecate*. You are about to give the Catholic valuable concessions—I am willing to rate your liberality high—I am ready to sacrifice somewhat to your prejudices, and much to the pride of your Ascendancy—I am satisfied to leave the noble Earl (Lord Aldborough) in the peaceful possession of his ancestors—and if there is any amongst you (supposed he applied to Lord Enniskillen) who would still cling to the old principle of severity and restriction, against the liberality of his present practice, I leave to such Noble Lords the defence of their favourite system of *benevolence*, of *union*, and of *charity*.

Having no amendment to propose, it is not necessary for me to detain your Lordships with a statement of my reasons for agreeing to a Bill which has the unanimous approbation of the House.—But, feeling those sentiments of approbation as strongly as any Noble Lord, and yielding to no man in attachment to those for whose relief it is intended. I wish to mark this measure with peculiar respect in every stage of its progress, and by a full attendance of the House, to give, if possible, additional weight to its unanimity.

I will

I will *put in practice* those sentiments of conciliation which some of your Lordships are satisfied with *professing*. I will let those angry passions rest, which, I am ashamed to see, it is are to irritate.—But I have a right to expect equal measure for the Catholic;—and I have, therefore, to regret, that it should have been thought necessary, by any noble Lord, to *insult*, in the moment of *liberality*; to mix *contumely* with *concession*; and to dispatch the whole Catholic persuasion,* and all its professors, with one stroke of indiscriminating reprobation.—But, happily, the generality of the censure of the most reverend prelate has deprived it of its effect.—The poison contains its own antidote—and I will not insult your understanding by vindicating the Irish Catholic against an imputation, which would stigmatize alike every member of his church, and embrace in its wide grasp of undistinguishing proscription the greater portion of the Christian World.

The measure brought forward by this bill contains a great principle of national policy. Upon this ground I am decidedly of opinion, that it ought to receive a full discussion.—But I observe that your Lordships have a different impression on your minds.—I shall therefore acquiesce; for my purpose is to conciliate. I will not force myself upon the House—I do not *provoke* discussion but I *await* it.

The question was then put from the Woolsack, and the bill passed, *nemine dissente*nte.

* Alluding to the Bishop of Cashel's declaration—that the Roman Catholic religion was a religion for fools and knaves.

PAMPHLETS

FOR AND AGAINST

The Emancipation of Roman Catholics.

BURKE's Letter to Sir Hercules Langrishe on emancipating Irish Catholics

—— Letter to Lord Kenmare

Todd Jones's Letter to the United Society of Irishmen of Belfast

M'Kenna's Letter on the impolicy of the Popery Laws

A Review of the Catholic Question, with a Defence of the Declaration of the Catholic Society of Dublin, by Theo. M'Kenna, M. D.

Thoughts on the present politics of Ireland by Theo. M'Kenna, M. D.

Tone's Argument in favour of the Catholics of Ireland

The Cause of the Roman Catholics pleaded in an Address to the Protestants of Ireland, by the Rev. John Nassau

Catholic Society's Declaration, and Transactions of Catholic Committee

Strictures on Catholic Declaration

Review of Strictures on Catholic Declaration

Address from the Catholic Committee to their Protestant Brethren

The Petition of the Roman Catholics of Ireland, intended to have been presented to Parliament in February 1792; with a Preface

Vindiciæ Catholicæ: A full Defence of the Declaration of the Catholic Society of Dublin, in reply to an anonymous Pamphlet, intitled Strictures, &c. with a vindication of the Protestant Dissenters, by An Irish Helot.

Plain

P A M P H L E T S.

- Plain Arguments in Defence of the People's absolute dominion
over the Constitution
- Dissertation on the Election Franchise
- Inquiry into the moral and political tendency of the Roman Catholic Religion
- Clifford's Reflection on the choice of Catholic Bishops
- Curry's History of Civil wars in Ireland
- Political Address to the Catholics of Ireland, by Paddy Driscoll
- Presbyterio Catholicorum
- Letter to Major Hobart
- Letter to Lord Kenmare
- Report of Penal Statutes in force against the Catholics
- Anti-Catholic, being an answer to arguments in favour of Catholics
- Impartial Defence of the Established Church
- Lord Petre's Letters, with the Protests of the Catholics of England
- The Constitutional Interests of Ireland considered with respect to the Popery Laws
- Sir Hercules Langrishe's Speech on the Roman Catholic Bill
- The Cat let out of the Bag
- John Bull's Letter to Paddy Whack.
- Paddy Whack's two Answers.
- Free Thoughts on the Protestant Ascendancy

The first of the year was a very dry one, and the crops were much injured. The weather was very hot, and the ground was very dry. The crops were much injured, and the yield was very small. The weather was very hot, and the ground was very dry. The crops were much injured, and the yield was very small.

The second of the year was a very wet one, and the crops were much injured. The weather was very cold, and the ground was very wet. The crops were much injured, and the yield was very small. The weather was very cold, and the ground was very wet. The crops were much injured, and the yield was very small.